NARCISSUS

EVELYN SCOTT

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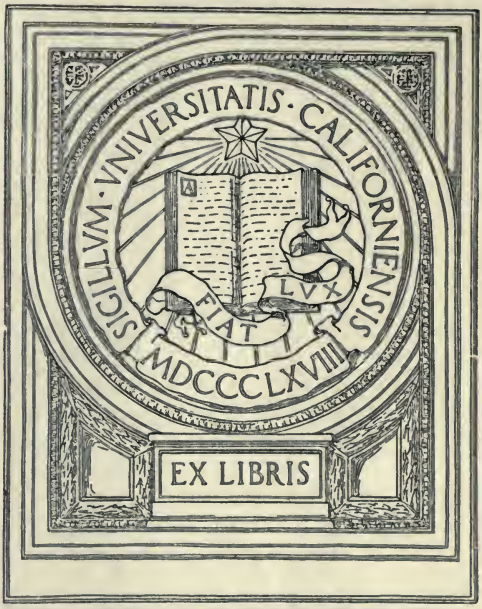

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BY EVELYN SCOTT

PRECIPITATIONS
THE NARROW HOUSE
NARCISSUS
THE GOLDEN DOOR *(In Preparation)*

NARCISSUS

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

BY

EVELYN SCOTT

NEW YORK
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UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

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"Nought loves another as itself,
Nor venerates another so,
Nor is it possible to thought
A greater than itself to know."

WILLIAM BLAKE.

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NARCISSUS

PART I

AT three o'clock in the afternoon Julia put on her hat. Her dressing table with its triple mirror stood in an alcove. It was a very fine severe little table. It was Julia's vanity to be very fine and dainty in her toilet. Here was no powder box, but lotions and expensive scents. When she sat before the glass she enjoyed the defiant delicacy which she saw in the lines of her lifted head, and there was a thrill which she could not analyze in the sight of her long white hands lying useless in her lap. They made her in love with herself.

Her hat was of bright brown straw and when she slipped on her fur coat she was pleased with the luxurious incongruity of the effect.

Nellie, the old Negro servant, was away, and Julia's step-children, May and Bobby, were at school. As Julia descended the stairway to the lower hall, her silk dress, brushing the carpet, made a cool hissing sound in the quiet passageway.

She opened the front door softly and passed into

the long street which appeared sad and deserted in the spring sunshine. Under the cold trees, that were budding here and there, were small blurred shadows. In the tall yellow apartment house across the way windows were open and white curtains shook mysteriously against the light. Above a cornice smoke from a hidden chimney rushed in opaque volumes to dissolve against the cold glow of the remote sky.

Julia walked along, feeling as though she were the one point in which the big silent city in the chill wind grew conscious of itself. It was only when she reached Dudley Allen's doorstep that her mood changed, and she felt that when she went in she would be robbed of her new glorious indifference about her life.

She rang the bell above the small brass plate, and when the white door had opened and she was mounting the soft green-carpeted stairs up the long corridor, it seemed to her that she was going back into herself.

In the passage before Dudley's rooms he came to meet her as he had done before. His hard eyes as they looked at her had a sort of bloom of triumph.

"I was sure you'd come." He grasped both her

hands and drew her through the tall doorway. "Dear!"

"I suppose you were." She smiled at him with a clear look, knowing that in his discomfort before her he was condemning himself.

"Won't you kiss me?" They were in his studio. He pouted his lips under his mustache. His eyes shone with uneasy brilliance.

She kissed him. She understood that the simpler she was in her abandon the more disconcerted he became.

When she had taken off her hat and laid it upon his drawing-board, he held her against him and caressed her hair. Because he was afraid of his own silence, he kept repeating, "Dear! My dear!"

"Aren't we lovers, Julia?" he insisted at last, childishly. He was embarrassed and wanted to make a joke of his own mood, but she saw that he was trembling. His mouth smiled. His eyes were clouded and watchful with resentment.

"How deeply are we lovers, Dudley?" She leaned her cheek against his breast. She did not wish to look at him. Suddenly she was terrified that a lover was able to give her nothing of what other women received.

"You love me. Look at me, Julia. Say you love me."

Her lids fluttered, but she kept her eyes fixed upon his small plump hand, white through its black down. The hand was all at once a pitiful trembling thing which belonged to neither of them. It had a poor detached involuntary life.

Because of the hand she felt sorry for him, and she said, warmly and abruptly, "I love you." Her eyes, when they met his, were filled with tears. Yet she knew the love she gave him was not the thing for which he asked.

He was suspicious. His hands fell away from her. "Was I mistaken yesterday?" His voice sounded bitter and tired.

She was pained and her fear of losing him made her ardent. "No, Dudley! No!" Her face flushed, and her eyes, lifted to his, were dim with emotion.

"Did you understand what I hoped—how much I hoped for when I asked you to come here to-day, Julia?"

"Yes," she said. All the time she felt that she loved him because they were both suffering and in a kind of danger from each other which he was unable to see. She loved him because she was the only

person who could protect him from herself. She was oppressed by her accurate awareness of him: of his hot flushed face close to hers, the shape of his nose, the pores of his skin, the beard in his cheeks, the irregular contour of his head matted with dark curls, his ears that she thought ugly with the tufts of hair that grew above their lobes, his neck which was short and white and a little thick, and his hands, hairy and at the same time womanish. Already she knew him so intimately that it gave her a sense of guilt toward him. Her recognition of him was so cruel, and he seemed unmindful of it.

When she had reassured him that she loved him, he drew her down beside him on the couch with the black and gold cover. He wanted to make tea for her and to show her some drawings that had been sent to him for his judgment.

She knew that while he talked he was on his guard before her. It seemed ugly to her that they were afraid of each other.

The drawings, by an unknown artist, were very delicate, indicated by a few lines on what appeared to her a vast page. It humiliated her to recognize that she did not understand the things he was interested in. To admit, even inwardly, that

something fine was beyond her awoke in her an arrogance of self-contempt. I'm only fit for one need, she said to herself. Then, aloud, "They are very subtle and wonderful, Dudley. Much too fine, I think, for me to appreciate. I really don't want any tea." And she gazed at him hatefully as though he had hurt her.

Feeling herself so much less than he, even in this one thing, made her hard again. She stretched her hands up to him. "Kiss me!" The frankness and kindness were gone out of her eyes.

He was startled by the ugly unexpected look, and his own eyes grew sensual and moist as he sank beside her on his knees.

She drew his head against her breast and between her palms she could feel his pulses, heavy and labored Each found at the moment something loathsome in caressing the other; but it was only when they despised each other that their emotions were completely released.

IT was growing dusk. The cold pale day outside became suddenly hectic with color. Through the windows at the back of the room Julia could see the black roof of the factory across the courtyard

and the shell-pink stain that came into the sky above it. The heavy masses of buildings were glowing shadows. The room was filled with pearl-colored reflections.

Dudley watched her as she lifted her hair in a long coil and pinned it against her head.

She glanced at his small highly colored face with its little mustache above the full smiling lips. Again she was ashamed of seeing him so plainly. She wished that she were exalted out of so definite a physical perception of him.

"Julia. Julia." He repeated her name ruminatively. "You did come to care for me. What do you feel, Julia? What has this made you feel?" He could not bear the sense of her separateness from him. He was obsessed by curiosity about her and a lustful desire to outrage her mental integrity. He could not bear the feeling that the body which had possessed him so completely yet belonged to itself. His eyes, intimate without tenderness, smiled with a guilty look into hers.

She gazed at him as if she wanted to escape. For a moment she wished that they could have disappeared from each other's lives in the instant which culminated their embrace. Their talk made her feel

herself grotesque. "I don't know," she said. "How can I say? I don't know."

Though he would not admit it to himself, her air of timidity and bewilderment pleased him. "How many lovers have you had, Julia?"

She thought, He only asked that to hurt me. She could not answer him. She smiled. Her lips quivered. She looked at her hands.

She saw him only as something which contributed to her experience of herself. She had her experience of him before she gave herself to him. What happened between them happened to her alone.

"What do you feel? Tell me? How deeply do you love me, Julia?" He knew that he was making her resentful toward him, but it was only when women felt nothing at all in regard to him that he found it hard to bear. He grasped her hands and held them.

"Of course I love you deeply." Her voice trembled. She turned her head aside.

"What do you feel about your husband, Julia?"

In spite of the pressure of his hands she felt Dudley far away, dissolving from her.

When she did not answer him at once he was

afraid again and began to kiss her. "You love me. You love me very much."

"Oh, you know I love you," Julia said. She wanted to cry out and to go away. He hurt her too much. Everything about him hurt her. She had a drunken sense of his disregard of her. She could no longer comprehend why she had come there and given herself to him. It was terrible to discover that one did irrevocable things for no articulate reason. She was less interested in Dudley now than in this new and terrible astonishment about herself. She could not believe that she had taken a lover out of boredom and discontent with herself, so she was forced to a mystical conviction of the inevitability of her act.

"I must leave you, Dudley. I can't bear to go. I love you. I love you." She kept reiterating, I love you, and felt that she was trying to convince herself against an uncertainty.

He regarded her curiously with the same uneasiness. "I may be going away soon, Julia. The French painter I told you about—the friend I had when I was in Paris. He's through with America now and wants me to go to Japan with him. Do you

want me to go? I can't bear to be away from you."

"Go. Of course you must go." She felt hysterical. She took up her hat.

He could not endure the cold reserved look that came over her face. "Julia." Hating her, he put his arms about her, and when her body suddenly relaxed he resented its unexpected pliancy.

I don't know her, he repeated to himself with a kind of despair against her.

JULIA unlocked the front door and stepped into the still hall. A neat mirror was set in the wall of the white-paneled vestibule. Here she saw herself reflected dimly. Everything about her was rich-colored in the afterglow that came golden through the long glass in the niches on either side of the entrance. The polished floor was like a pool. Julia felt that she had never seen her house before and this was a moment which would never come again.

When she went into the dining room she found the table laid, and the knives and forks on the vague white cloth were rich with the purplish luster of the twilight. The white plates looked secret with reflections. Beyond the table, through the French windows, she could see the darkness that was in the

back yard close to the earth, but above the high wall at the end was the brilliant empty sky. The base of the elm tree was in the shadow. The top, with its new buds, glistened stiffly.

She passed into the clean narrow kitchen. She had planned white sinks and cupboards when she and her husband, Laurence Farley, were directing the renovation of the place. Julia loved the annihilating quality of whiteness.

Old Nellie, standing before the stove, glanced impassively at her mistress.

"Dinner time, Nellie?" Julia wondered what was in the old woman's mind, what made her so strong in her reticence that everything about her seemed carved from her own will. The long strong arms moved stiffly in the black sleeves. The ungainly hands moved heavily and surely.

"Reckon 'tis, Miss Julia." Nellie mumbled with her cracked purplish lips. When she smiled her brown face remained cold. She wore a wig of straight black hair, but baldish patches of gray wool showed under the edges against the rich dry color of her neck. Her shoulders were rounded as if by the weight of her arms. Her breasts fell forward. When she moved, her spine remained rigid above

the sunken hips of a thin old savage woman. Her buttocks dragged. She was bent with strength.

Julia was all at once afraid of her servant. "I must find my children." She moved toward the door, smiling over her shoulder. Nellie's reserve seemed to demand a recognition. Julia wanted to get away from it.

She went on to her sitting room. The door was ajar. Fifteen-year-old May was there with her boy friend, Paul. As Julia entered Paul rose clumsily and May leaned forward in her chair.

Paul, irritated by the sight of Julia's radiance, was gloomy. He was aware of May, young and awkward, a part of his own youth. May's presence exposed a part of him and made him feel cowed and soiled.

"Paul's still talking about Bernard Shaw, Aunt Julia." May was glad "Aunt" Julia had come. When May was alone with Paul he expected things of her that she could not give. He would not allow her to be close to him. He required that she pass a test of mental understanding. She liked him best when others were present. Then she could warm herself timidly and secretly in a knowledge of him that she could never utter.

Julia laughed affectionately. "Aren't you weary of such serious subjects, Paul?" She felt that she saw the two from some distance inside herself. She saw herself, beautiful and remote before Paul, and him loving her. They loved the same thing. It filled her with tenderness. He's a child! She felt guilty in her recognition of his youth.

"Is that a serious subject?" Paul was wary. Being serious always made one ridiculous. Without waiting for her reply, he said, "I'm boring May with my company. I must go." As he glanced toward Julia his eyes had the sad malicious look of a monkey's. A little color passed over his pale narrow face with its expression of precocious childishness.

Julia's long arms reached up to her hat. Paul's gaze made her feel her body beautiful and strong, but her heart felt utterly lost in wickedness. I'm Dudley Allen's mistress, she said to herself. She had expected the reassurance of pain in her sense of sin; but the meaning of what she had done was so utterly vacant that it frightened her. "Why not have dinner with us? I want to hear more of your discussion."

Paul resented everything about her, her strong-

ness and poise and the impression she gave him of having passed from something in which he was still held. He moved his shoulders grotesquely. "Oh, Shaw's too facile. He's only a bag of tricks." He could not bear to be with May any longer. She's a silly little girl. "Good-night." He went out quickly. She's laughing at me! She's trying to make me rude. They heard the front door slam.

Paul's accusing air had given Julia a feeling of self-condemnation. She could not look at May at once.

"I am stupid with Paul," May said. "I don't see why he likes to talk to me. He's so grown-up and intellectual and I never know what to say to him." She smiled unhappily. Her thin little hands moved awkwardly in her lap. She wanted Aunt Julia to like her.

Julia found in May's eagerness an inference of reproach, and was kind with an effort. "Nonsense, May. Paul finds you a very interesting little companion. He enjoys talking to you very much."

May's mouth quivered. Her eyes were soft and appeared dark in her small pale face. "But he's eighteen," she said.

There were slow footsteps, ponderous on the

stairs. Julia knew that Laurence had come. Her heart beats quickened almost happily. She wanted to experience the reproach of his face. Without naming what she waited for, as a saint looks forward to his crucifixion, she looked forward to the moment when he should condemn her.

Laurence stood in the doorway. "Well, Julie, girl, how are you to-night?" His brows contracted momentarily when he noticed May. "How are you, May?" But his gaze returned to Julia and he smiled at her steadily. His lips were harsh and at the same time sweet.

"You're tired, dear. Come sit by our fire." Julia could not meet his eyes. She watched his heavy slouched shoulders and observed the loose bulge of his coat as he sank deeply in the high-backed chair which she offered him. His hands were wonderful. Small white hesitating hands. She remembered Dudley's hands passing over her, repulsive to her, hungry hands with a kind of lascivious innocence that hurt.

Dudley's bright secretive eyes seemed close to her, between her and her husband, giving out a harsh warmth that suffocated her. She identified

herself so with her imaginings that it was as if she had become invisible to Laurence.

"Yes. I've had an interesting day at the laboratory. Even the commercial side of science has its diversions."

On the hearth the delicate drifting ash took a lilac tinge from some fallen bits of stick in which a crimson glow trembled like a diffused respiration. The room was strange with firelight. Bronze flames burst suddenly from the logs in torrents of rushing silk.

Laurence began to tell about the experiment in anaphylaxis which he had been making in the laboratory that he had charge of at a medical manufacturing establishment. He put the tips of his fingers together while his elbows rested on the arms of his chair. His heavy distinguished face was brown-red from the fire. The gray hair on his temples was animate as with a life unrelated to him. In his ungainly repose there was a dignity of acceptance which Julia recognized, though she could not state it.

Julia felt annihilated by his trust. When he talked on, unaware of her secret misery, it was as though he had willed her out of being. She and her pain had ceased to be.

She had a vision of herself in Dudley's arms. That person in Dudley's arms was alive. She was conscious of herself and Laurence as a double deadness on either side of the living unrelated vision. Then it passed and there was nothing but Laurie's dead voice.

AFTER dinner, while Julia was hearing Bobby's lessons downstairs, Laurence went up to her sitting room to rest and wait for her. He sat down by the Adams desk. The glow from the blue pottery lamp with its orange shade shone along his thick gray-sprinkled hair and lighted one side of his strongly lined face, his deep-set eyes with their crinkled lids, his large well-shaped nose with its bitter nostrils, and his rather small mouth with its hard-sweet expression.

When he heard Julia's step he lifted his head and glanced expectantly toward the door.

Julia's hair was in a loose knot against her neck. She was dressed in a long plain smock of a curious green. Laurence wondered what genius had taught her to select her clothes. While his first wife was alive he despised the mere vainness of dress, but since marrying Julia he had come to feel that clothes

provided the art of individualization. It was marvelous that a woman who had previously expended most of her industry as a laboratory assistant had lost none of the knack of enhancing her feminine attributes.

"Bobby has the most indefatigable determination to have his own way. He hasn't any respect for our educational system. I felt he simply must finish his history before he succumbed to the charms of Jack Wilson's new motor cycle."

Laurence found in her voice a peculiar emotional timbre which never failed to stir him, and when she sat down near him he was caught as always by the helplessness of her large hands lying in her lap.

"I don't fancy his playing with motor cycles."

They were silent a moment.

"Julie?" He smiled apologetically. He noticed that her eyes evaded him and it made him unhappy. "Not much company for you. I'm a typical American man of business—engrossed in my profession. Wasn't it to-night that you were going to that meeting on Foreign Relief?"

"You've discouraged my philanthropies," Julia said. "Besides, they won't miss me." She lowered her gaze, and made a wry deprecating mouth.

He felt that she was shutting him out from something—from her cold youth. He had not intended to discourage her enthusiasms, but it would have relieved him to enfold her in the warmth of his inertia. He said inwardly that he must keep himself until she needed him. He wondered if he were merely jealous of her youngness which went on beyond him discovering itself.

There was a pastel on the desk beside him. "I see Allen has done another portrait of you."

Julia flushed as she turned to him. In her open look he found something concealed. He was ashamed of his thought. He stared at his own hands and hated their sensitiveness.

"I can't pretend to see myself in it. It looks grotesque to us with our Victorian conceptions of art, doesn't it?" She smiled, gazing at him with a harassed but eager air of demand.

He did not wish to see her eyes that asked to be defended against themselves. He stared at the picture a moment in silence. It irritated him to feel that the artist had observed something in Julia which was hidden from her husband. When he finally glanced with hard amused eyes at her, he felt himself weak. "My mentality is not equal to

an appreciation of your friend's stuff. I'm hopelessly bourgeois, Julia." He would not admit his hardening against each of Julia's interests as they came to her. He put his pain with the transience of her youth and condescended to her so that he need not take note of himself. "Did you arrange for the lecture courses at the settlement house?" he asked. He missed her former feverish engrossment in the projected lecture series and wanted to bring her back to it.

Julia made a pathetic grimace. "You've laughed at me so, Laurie. I realize all that was absurd—terribly futile."

"Did I? I thought I agreed with you that it was a fine thing to inoculate the struggling masses with the culture bug." He could not control his sarcasms, though he uttered them lightly. He wanted her to be as tired as he was—to rest with him. There was sweat on his wrists as he took his pipe from his pocket and pushed some tobacco into the dry charred bowl. When he laughed at her the pupils of his gray eyes were small and sharp and defensive, as though they had been pricked by his pain. Beautiful, he thought. She doesn't need me.

"I have a very middle-aged feeling about the welfare of humanity."

She came over and knelt by his side. "Am I too ridiculous? Can't you take me seriously, Laurie?" She wondered why it was that when he looked at her she always found suffering in his face. He held himself away from what she wanted to give. She wanted an abandon in which she would be glorified. She imagined eyes finding her wonderful. She smiled at him, her sweet humorless smile.

Laurence stroked her hair. "I take you too seriously," he said. "I sometimes feel that a husband is a very casual affair to you modern women."

She was tender to his ignorance of her and vain of her secret terror of herself. Watching him, she thought of the day when his youngest child died and he had allowed her to see his suffering. Because she had never wished to hurt him she resented it that he had never again been helpless before her. She wondered if he had been strong like this to his other wife, or if he gave more of his suffering to the dead than to the living. Suffering filled Julia with tenderness, so she could not think herself cruel. "Dear!" She kissed him gently, maternally, and climbed to her feet.

He saw her reproachful eyes. Youth, so free with itself. Rapacious for emotion. He felt bitterly his necessity more final than hers. "Where's my last *Journal of American Science?*" He dismissed her intensity. Lifting his thick brows, he took out spectacles and put them on. He watched her over the rims.

She handed him his paper. He was a child to her. Her secret sense of sin made her strong and superior. She wanted to be gentle. She did not know why the sense of wrongdoing made her so confident of herself. While he read the journal she seated herself on the opposite side of the fireplace with her embroidery. When he lowered the paper for an instant and she had a glimpse of his oldish oblivious face, she loved its unawareness and tears came to her eyes again.

ON Saturday morning Julia attended the meeting of a club in which the problems of business women were reviewed. The members gathered in a hotel auditorium where musicales were sometimes given. The long windows of the room opened above an alleyway and its gold rococo gloom was relieved of the obscure sunshine by electric lights. The

women sat in little groups here and there, only half filling the place, and the murmur of voices went on indistinguishably until the president, Mrs. Hurst, a pale self-confident little woman with a whimsical smile, stepped to the platform, below the garlanded reliefs of Beethoven and Mozart, and struck her gavel on the desk. Then an unfinished silence crept over the scattered assemblage. A stout intellectual-looking Jewess came forward ponderously, adjusted her nose glasses, and read the minutes of the previous meeting, while those before her listened with forced attention, or frankly considered the interesting design of green and black embroidery which ornamented her dark blue dress.

But once the subjects of the day were under discussion the concentration of the audience was natural and intense. Then the president, with demure severity, rapped with her gavel and reminded too ardent debaters that they were out of order.

Julia could not resist the sense of importance that it gave her to state her serious opinion upon certain problems which affected her sex. When she rose to express herself her exposition was so succinct that she was invited to the platform where what she said could be better appreciated.

The repetition of her speech was uncomfortably self-conscious. Her cheeks grew faintly pink. There were several women in the audience whom she disliked, and when she talked in this manner she felt that she was beating them down with her righteousness. She observed in the faces of many a virtuous and deliberate stupidity that was a part of their determination not to understand her.

Her speech intoxicated her a little. When she stepped to the floor amidst small volleys of applause, the room about her grew slightly dim. For an hour the discussion went on, back and forth, one woman rising and the next interrupting her statement. After Julia herself had spoken, nothing further seemed to her of consequence. The other women were hopelessly verbose, or, if they argued against her, ridiculously unseeing. Their past applause rang irritatingly in her mind. She recalled Dudley Allen's contempt for this feeble utilitarian consideration of eternal things. She was proud of comprehending the unmorality—the moral cynicism—of art. She felt that her broad capacity for understanding men like Dudley Allen liberated her from the narrow ethical confines of the lives that sur-

rounded her, which took their color from social usage.

Yet she resented Dudley's attitude toward her slight attempts at self-expression. It reminded her of Laurence's protective air when she first took a position under him at the laboratory. It was part of the conspiracy against her attempt at achieving significance beyond the limits of her personal problem. It hurt her as much as it pleased her when either Dudley or her husband complimented her dress or commented on the grace of her hands when she was pouring tea. Her feeling was the same when she thought of having a child. She wanted the child in everything but the sense of accepting the inevitable in maternity. She sometimes imagined that if she could bear a child that was hers alone she could be glad of it. In order to avoid being stifled by a conviction of inferiority, she was constantly demanding some assurance of dependence on her from those she was associated with.

SINCE childhood Dudley Allen had looked to himself to achieve greatness. He had been a pretty child, but effeminate, undersized, and not

noted for cleverness. His father was a Unitarian minister in a New England town; his mother, an ambitious woman absorbed in the pursuit of culture. Her esthetic conceptions were of an intellectual order, but she sang in the choir of her husband's church and thought of herself as frustrated in the expression of a naturally artistic temperament.

Dudley remembered her with vexation. She had been ambitious for him, and he had resented her efforts to use him for vicarious self-fulfilment. She had him taught to play the violin and developed his taste for music. It was chiefly in contradiction to her suggestions that he early interested himself in paint. Now he played the violin occasionally, but never in public.

His father was a man repressed and made severe by his sense of justice. As a child Dudley knew that this parent was ashamed of his son's physical weakness and emotional explosiveness. His father wanted him to be a lawyer. His mother wished him to become a man of letters or a musician of distinction.

Dudley was reared in the sterile atmosphere of a religion which confined itself to ethical adherences. However, he absorbed Biblical lore and adapted it to his more poetic needs. His father's contempt

pained him, but in no wise diminished the boy's vaguely acquired conviction that he was himself one of the chosen few. Dudley identified himself with the singers of Israel who spoke with God. As he was unable to cope with bullying playmates of his own age, his exalted isolation was his defense.

When he was twelve years old his mother discovered a journal in which he had set down some of his intimacies with the Creator. She admonished him for his absurdities and burned the book. The incident helped to develop his resistance to the opinions of those who would destroy his consoling fancies. He noted precociously symptoms of his mother's weaknesses.

By the time he was sent away to college he had developed his secret defense, and his timidity was no longer so apparent. His progress through his courses, while erratic, was in part brilliant. When he returned home after his first absence his father showed some pride in the visit.

At eighteen Dudley had evolved a philosophy which permitted him to look upon himself as a prophet. Praise irritated him as much as blame. When people made him angry he retorted to them with waspish sarcasms. When he was alone he

worked himself into transports of despair which made him happy. He thought of himself as the peculiar interpreter of universal life. He liked to go out in the woods and fields alone, and under the trees to take his clothes off and roll in the grass. He was recklessly generous on occasion, in defiance of habits of penuriousness. He felt most kindly toward Negroes, day laborers, and other people whose social status was inferior to his own. Yet among his own kind he exacted every recognition of social superiority.

After vexatious arguments with his father, he went to Paris to continue the study of painting. His technical facility surprised every one. His conversations were facile and worldly, he was impeccable in his dress, while he thought of a trilogy in spirit which embraced David in Israel, Spinoza, and himself. His greatest fear in life was the fear of ridicule. The physical cowardice which had oppressed his childhood remained with him, and his escape from it was still through his religious belief in his inward significance. Men of the crasser type despised him utterly, and he confuted them with stinging cleverness. A few who were artists were attracted by the rich, almost feminine quality of his

emotions. He found these men, rather than the women he knew, were the dominant figures in his life.

He was in terror of all women with whom he could not establish himself on planes of physical intimacy. But after he had arrived at such a state with them, they interested him very little. Their attraction for him was curious, rarely compelling. In all of his affairs his condition was complicated by his fear of relinquishing any influence he had once been able to assert.

When he returned to America after two years abroad he felt stronger by the intellectual distances which separated him from his former life. If he had not rebelled against the tone of condescension in which his fellow artists referred to his youthful success, he might have been contented with the humbler friends who were waiting to lionize him. He continued to cultivate an aloofness which sustained his pride as much against inferior compliments as, in the past, it had protected him from jibes.

He could not console himself with the praises of most of the women he met, for he always fancied that they were attempting to flatter him into entanglements. When he encountered Julia, however,

the mixture of egoism and humility which he sensed in her discontent intrigued his vanity. He saw that she was isolated and unhappy, and he longed for an admiration which his discrimination would not condemn. In her he anticipated a disciple of whom he need not be ashamed; but until she should be sexually disarmed he was frightened of her.

MAY and Paul were in the park, by the side of the lake. The water was caught in meshes of hot rays as in a web. In the sky, above the trees, the light, drawn inward from the vague horizon, glowed in a fathomless spot where the sun was sinking. The grass was uncut in the field about them and the little seeded tops floated in a red-lilac mist above the greer stems.

"I don't like your Aunt Julia, May!"

May's mouth half smiled, uneasy. "Why not?"

They sat down on a hillock and Paul began to tear up grass blades as if he wanted to hurt them. When he thought of Julia it made him feel sorry for himself, and he hated her. "She's so darn complacent and shallow."

"Why, Paul, Aunt Julia's always doing things for people. She's been awfully good to you. After

the way she helped you with your exams I shouldn't think you'd talk like that." May gazed at him with wide soft eyes of reproach.

He picked at the grass. "Oh, I'm joking. I suppose she felt very virtuous when she helped me."

"But she does lots, Paul. She's always interested in some charity work."

"Pish! Charity! What does a woman like that know about life!"

May was timidly silent.

"Some of these days I'm going to cut loose from everything—all these smug conventions."

"But where'll you go, Paul? I thought you wanted to study medicine."

"Well, I'd rather give up that than stand this atmosphere. Oh, hell! What's the use!"

She liked it when he said hell. It made her feel intimate with a strange thing. Afraid. "But what do you want to do, Paul?"

Looking away from her, he did not answer. It soothed him to be superior to May, but he knew enough to be ashamed of such consolation. Too easy. A kid like that! "It don't matter. I've got to get away. I don't fit into the sort of life your Aunt Julia stands for. What's there here for me

anyway!" He added, "Of course you're too young to bother with my troubles." He stared stubbornly at the twinkling tree tops across the lake.

May was crushed by this accusation of youth. "You used to say you wanted to stay here and help radicals. Some day there'll be a revolution—" Her humility would not permit her to continue.

Paul was irritated by this reminder of his inconsistency. Still he felt guilty and wanted to be kind. "Pshaw! A lot of chance for revolution in America now. You must have been listening to your Aunt Julia talk parlor socialism, child."

May was feebly indignant in defense. "You didn't think so when you used to read Karl Marx. You know you didn't!"

The thin immature quality of her voice wounded him. He wanted to be separate from it. He was aggrieved because all the world seemed to come to conclusions ahead of him. He wanted to think something no one had ever thought before. Now he had an unadmitted fear that what Julia had said had diminished his interest in the struggles of the working class. "I know a fellow who cut loose from home a couple of months ago and shipped as a steward on a White Star boat. His sister got a let-

ter from him saying that when he got over he was fired, but he found another bunk right away in a sailing vessel. He's going to West Africa. You remember that kid that came and visited the Hursts?"

"Yes, but I don't see any reason for you to throw up everything you've always planned."

Paul rubbed his chin. Beard. Of course it was childish to talk about "seeing life". He didn't take pride in such absurdities as that. "What are you going to do with *your*self, May?" He was gentle but light.

"Me?" She smiled with a startled air. She felt helpless when people asked her about herself. Of course she understood he wasn't serious. "I suppose I'm going to college where Aunt Julia went—and then—oh, I don't know, Paul! I'm not clever like Aunt Julia. You know she put herself through, and then earned her own living for a long time." Her small face flushed.

As she turned a little he watched the thick pale braid of her hair swing between her shoulders. "Yes, I know. Aunt Julia thinks the fact that she once worked deserves special recognition." His sarcasm was laborious. He knew that he was saying

too much. He leaned forward and twitched May's plait. "Why don't you do your hair up? You want to look grown-up."

She laughed. She was grateful when he teased her. That meant it didn't matter what she answered. "I don't want to look grown-up."

"Aunt Julia doesn't want any grown-up stepdaughters around." Something had him, he thought. It was irresistible.

"Paul!" A catch of surprise and rebuke in her soft tone. "I don't know what's got into you lately. I think it's horrid—always suggesting Aunt Julia has some mean motive in everything she does! She's one of the loveliest people on earth! She's too good for you. You just don't understand her and you're jealous."

Paul was amused. "Jealous, am I!" He would not show the child his vexation with her. All at once he was disconcerted to realize that he had become very depressed. He pitied himself. He watched May's legs as she stretched them stiffly before her, thin little legs. Her high shoes were loosely laced and the tops bulged away from her ankles. Sweet. He reached and took her hand. Cold little hand! May, too embarrassed to take

notice of his gesture, let him hold it. He thought she was sweet. He might like to kiss her—maybe. Not now. He could not bear to be as young as she was. While he held her hand it came over him that there was something dark and sickly in himself. He was vain that she could not understand it. Rotten. She's a kid. He tried not to recognize his pride in finding himself impure. He was fed up with everything. Hell!

As the sun disappeared the world grew suddenly bright, and long red rays striped the tree trunks and the grass, endless rays reaching softly out of the gorgeous welter in the western sky. The water twinkled fixedly. The green grass was like mist over the fields.

Paul became abruptly agitated. "Better go home, hadn't we?"

May glanced at him furtively. His eyes made her unhappy. "I suppose we had."

They got up awkwardly. When they were standing he let her hand drop as if it had been nothing. She walked before him, a little girl in a short dress with a soft braid of hair hanging under a red cap.

"You don't look fifteen, May."

"Don't I?"

He tried to catch up with her. He wondered what he was afraid of. Her voice had a smothered sound, almost like a sob. She did not look back.

It was nearly night now. The sky without the sun was a dark burning blue. A strange cloud floated white above the black trees.

Paul was suddenly happy and excited. When I get home—Uncle Alph—that old fool. Aunt Susie. They were married. What did that ever mean! Purification by fire is all that's good enough for people like that. A sin to get married at all. If I thought people's bodies were like that! Paul wondered to himself if he were mad. It hurt to think through things. People went on living in their filthy world. Thick stockings were ugly. May's legs. Thin little legs in ugly stockings. Why doesn't she shine her shoes! Little rag picker! "Did you know that you were an untidy person, May?" he called. As she looked back over her shoulder he could feel her smile. Her vague face stared pale at him down the path. The moon was floating out from the trees, pale moon like a face. Thin light stole silver along the branches high up. Little moon, said Paul to himself, staring at May's face and smiling. He felt ill, foolishly, pleasantly ill.

When he came up with her it was as if he were his own shadow walking beside her. "Little moon, I love you." He talked under his breath. He scarcely wanted her to hear his absurdity. Then he placed his arm around her. Her cold sweet thinness was like the shadow of the moon, thin and still on the topmost branch of the strange tree. Her small breast swelled against his hand and he could feel her heart beat. "Oh, May!" He kissed her. He kissed the silence between them. "Gee, kid!" he said.

"Paul, dear."

They walked along together, happy; but less happy as they neared the hedge that cut them off from the street and the glow from an arc lamp began to fall across the grass.

When they stood under the light the absurdity had gone from Paul. He wondered what had happened to him back there in the darkness. He had taken his arm from her waist and now he pressed her hands, afraid that she would observe the change in him. "Good night, May, child."

May was tremulous and bewildered. "Good night, Paul." She tried laboriously to fit her tone to his brotherly kindliness.

MRS. HURST sat with Julia at tea in Julia's upstairs room. The late sun stretched tired rays across the soft blue carpet. The yellow curtains glowed before the open windows, and, fluttering apart, showed the thick foliage of the trees that screened the houses opposite. The atmosphere intensified the very immobility of the furniture. There was a voluptuous finality in the liquid repose of light on the polished floor and the glint of a glass vase, where needle rays of brightness were transfixed among the stems of flowers.

Julia poured tea from a flat vermilion pot. The tea stood clear and dark in the black cups. Over the two women hung a moist bitter odor, the bruised sweetness of withering roses. The afternoon smells of dampened dust and new-cut grass blew in from the street.

Mrs. Hurst took her cup in her small, slightly unsteady hand, and sipped. The veins were growing large and hard and showed through the delicately withered skin on which there were tiny brown spots like stains. She wore a wedding ring rubbed thin. "My dear, you still have that wonderful old Negress who used to be your maid? How do you manage to

keep her? I'm always struggling with some fresh domestic problem." Mrs. Hurst smiled and with her free hand settled her trim glasses on her neat nose. Her sweet little face, turned toward Julia, showed a determined insistence on negative happiness. "I think we have a great deal more to struggle with than our grandmothers did. We haven't only our homes to look after, but our social responsibilities are so great." Mrs. Hurst was beautifully and simply dressed in gray, and the soft outline of her hat, with its tilt of roses at the back, gave an air of gallantry to her faded features, which were those of a sophisticated little girl—the face of a woman of forty-six whose sex life has passed away without her knowing it.

"I'm afraid I've become a renegade as far as my social responsibilities are concerned. I feel myself so inadequate to any real accomplishment, Mrs. Hurst." Julia smiled guardedly and resentfully. Something in her wanted to destroy the delicate aggressive repose of the woman opposite, and felt helpless before it.

"Ah, you mustn't feel that, my dear. All of us feel it at times, but I do believe that it depends on

us women more than on our men folk, perhaps, to allay the unrest of our day. Changing conditions of labor have taken the homes away from so many. I think we should carry the spirit of the home out into the world." Mrs. Hurst made a plaintive little *moue* of faded sauciness. As men were obliterated from her personal interests, she reverted to a child's demure coquetry in pleading her cause with her own sex.

"I can't look upon myself as the person for such a mission," Julia said. Her eyes and lips were cold as she stared pleasantly at her visitor. Julia felt a sudden sharp vanity in the thought of the sin against society which initiated her into another life. She was confused by her pride in adultery, and sought for an exalted ethical term which would justify her sense of glorying in her act. Dudley—his hands upon me. I couldn't be free. Eagles. The ethics of eagles. Julia knew that she was absurd. She was humiliated and defiant. She was aware of her body under her clothes as apart from her, and as though it were the only thing in the world that lived. It was terrible to feel her body lost from her. She fancied this was what people meant by the sense

of nakedness. When Dudley kissed her on the lips there was no nakedness, for she and her body had the same existence. She despised Mrs. Hurst, who separated her from her body. "You know I haven't a real genius for setting the world right."

Mrs. Hurst was gentle and severe. "We can't afford to lose you! I shall ask your delightful husband to influence you. As for genius—I imagine each of us has his own definition of that. We all think you showed something very much like genius in your conduct of the college campaign fund last winter. You should hear Charles expatiate on your cleverness as a business woman. We are practical people, Julia Farley, and we do need money. It is the golden key which opens the door for most of our ideals, I'm afraid."

Julia frowned slightly and tried to control her irritation. "Why can't Mr. Hurst undertake some of the financial problems? He would reduce my poor little efforts to such insignificance."

"But there you are, my dear! Charles lives in a man's world. He doesn't understand these things. Women are the conscience of the race." Mrs. Hurst smiled again and in her small mouth showed even rows of artificial teeth.

WHEN Julia woke in the night beside Laurence she perceived her body lying there naked and apart, and hands moving over it—horrible and secret hands. In the daytime in the street the body walked with her outside her clothes. With strange men her consciousness of that horrible impersonal flesh that was hers, though she knew nothing of it—though it belonged to the whole world—was most acute.

THE curtains moved and the spots of light on the floor opened and closed like eyes. A fly had crept inside the screens and made a singing noise against the window. A vase of flowers was on the table, and the shadow of a blossom, rigid and delicate, fell in the bar of sunshine that bleached the polished wood. There was pale sunshine on the chess board at which May and Paul were playing. Light took the color from the close-cropped hair at the nape of Paul's neck, and, when May glanced up at him, filled her eyes with brilliant vacancy so that she looked strange.

May bent forward again, her mouth loose in wonder.

Paul made a stupid move.

"Ah! You've lost him!" Aunt Julia said.

He did not answer her, but his shoulders took a resentful curve. He felt as if the veins in his temples were bursting, pouring floods of darkness before his eyes. He wished he might be rid of her, always there in the room beside him and May. He pushed forward another piece.

Aunt Julia came and stood beside him. She leaned down. She leaned down and laid her hand on his arm. "If only you hadn't lost that knight!"

The sound of her voice made everything dark again. He resented her more than he had ever resented anything on earth.

"Let me move for you once, Paul, child."

"But that won't be fair, Aunt Julia!" May watched them with a sudden brightening and dimming of the eyes. She was startled by the look of Aunt Julia's faintly flushed face so close to Paul's. What makes him look like that!

"I'll play for you, dear, too," Aunt Julia said. She was sorry for herself because her loneliness made her want even the children. She was tender of them. They could not understand her. She would not admit to herself that Paul's response to her presence thrilled and strengthened her. She wanted to be kind to the poor awkward boy. May

was such a baby. "Will you let me move your pawn there, May?"

May nodded. She was restive. She wanted to move for herself. When she resumed the game her eyes became wide and engrossed. "Check! Check!" She came out of her delight. She was clapping the palms of her thin hands and they made a muffled sound. They fell apart abruptly. Once more Aunt Julia was leaning close to Paul.

"You finished me all right, May."

May wondered if Paul were angry with her. What made his eyes so hard!

Julia was ashamed before May. That spineless little girl! Julia wanted to leave them both. May and the boy hurt her. Her body was so alive that her awareness of herself was very small. She was sure of her existence only through this humiliating certainty of other being. Their youth seemed disgusting to her and she wanted to leave them with it. She smiled at them constrainedly. The two figures swam before her. "Good-by, Paul. I must leave you children and attend to some humdrum duties below stairs."

"Good-by," Paul said. He could not look at her. She went out. The stir of her dress died away. He

feared to hear it go and to be alone with something in himself. "I'm sick of chess, May. I must be going too." He rose.

"Must you?" May got up.

Paul went to the table and took his cap. He wondered why she was so still, why he could not bring himself to see her. When he turned around she was watching him with her silly timid air. It repelled him that she smiled so much for nothing at all. His eyes were blank with distrust of her. Why does she smile like that! She made him cruel. He hated her for making him cruel. He wanted to be cruel. "You seem pretty glad to get rid of me!"

"Why, Paul!" May flashed a glance at him. She stared at the floor, and she was dying in the obscure impression of moonlight on trees near a park gate.

Paul came up to her and, with the surreptitious movement of a sulky child, pressed a hard kiss against her mouth.

Before she could respond to him he ran out, through the hall and down the stairs and into the street. He was terrified lest he should see Julia before he could leave the house. Anything but May! He didn't want May. Aunt Julia always coming close to him, touching him, laying her hand on his.

He felt trapped in his loathing of her. Why was it he could never forget her!

It was growing dusk. On either side of the infinite street the houses were vague. The trees were like plumes of shadow waving above him. The stars in the sky, that yet glowed with the passing of the sun, were burning dust. He tried to think that he was mad. Beyond him under a street lamp he saw a dimly illumined figure—big buttocks wagging before him under a thin calico skirt. And the Negress passed out of sight.

By the time he reached home he was sick of himself, thoroughly dejected, perceiving the vileness of his own mind. He crept up the back stairs unseen, and in his small room lay face downward on his bed. He thought he ought to kill himself to keep from thinking things like that. Uncle Alph and his Aunt down in the dining room. He began to sob. God, all the rottenness in the world! If I did that it would be outright in the daytime. I wouldn't be ashamed. Naked bodies moved before him in a long line. They were ugly because he wanted to keep them out. Aunt Julia was there and even May. He would not see them, but they were ugly. Their ugliness was the horror that enveloped him. He

knew their ugliness because it became a part of him without his having seen it.

There was something beautiful at last. It was nakedness that belonged to no one. Nakedness without a face. It took him. He was asleep. There were breasts in the darkness. He was afraid. He could not wake up. He was fear and he was afraid of himself. He was against naked breasts that held him, that he could not see.

MAY tip-toed down the dark stairs, her small hand sliding along the cold mysterious rail. When she reached the lower hall she saw the door of the study open and Father sitting there with Bobby who was studying and very intent on the book he held upon his knees. There was a green lamp on the desk and a moth bumping against the shade and shattering its wings. The light, falling on Father's back, made the strands of hair twinkle on his drooped head, and his shoulders looked dusty in the black coat he wore. The study windows were open. Beyond Father was the dark yard. A square of the sky was like green silk. The moon, laid on it softly, was breathing light like a sea thing, glowing and dying.

When May had reassured herself of this unchanged world she tip-toed up to her room. She wanted to undress quickly so that she could be in bed and forget everything but Paul's unexpected kiss and the new cruel feel of his lips. Now that she was alone she wanted to forget about being ashamed. She had a curious, almost frightening, intimacy with her own sensations. She wanted to go on thinking of herself forever and ever.

DUDLEY'S intuitions were capable of sensing what might be called the psychological essences of those about him. He never became aware of the elusive value of a personality without wishing to absorb it into himself so that it became a part of his own experience. He could not bear to lose his sense of identity with those from whom he had compelled such contacts. For this reason, though he despised his parents, he maintained toward them the attitude of a dutiful son.

It was the same with all the friends of other days. When he was attracted by some one Dudley initiated him into a devastating intimacy. The person, for a time, would yield to a flattering tyranny, but, in the end, would rebel against the inequality of possession.

Dudley refuted all intellectual justifications of protest, and attributed the failure of his friendships to the emotional inadequacies of his disciples.

When women abandoned their sexual defenses to him, however, he found nothing left to achieve. They held a view of their relationships which made the subtler kinds of personal pride unnecessary to them. If they had received in life any spiritual disfigurements, they were only too ready to expose these where it would buy them a little pity through which they might insinuate themselves into another soul. Their spiritual instincts were as promiscuous as the physical expressions of embryo life. It was only as regarded their bodies that they showed anything like reserve. Even here it was more a matter of vanity than anything else, for in surrendering themselves in the flesh the thing they seemed most to fear was that once they were revealed they would not be sufficiently admired. It was irritating to feel that when they abandoned everything to a man they but attained to a subtler possession.

Not long before meeting Julia, Dudley passed through an experience in which he narrowly avoided matrimony. The girl had appeared to be peculiarly submissive to his influence; but at a time when his

complacency had allowed him to feel most tender of her she had evaded him. If she had been less precipitate he would have married her. He was thankful for the circumstance which had saved him, and when he corresponded with her he called her "my dear sister," or "my very dear friend". Now that she had abandoned him he was more generous toward her than he had ever been. He knew that one could give one's self in an impersonal gesture. But it was very tricky to take from others. He wrote her that he must learn to function alone, that it was the artist's life. She could never explain to herself why it was that she resented so deeply his condemnation of his own weakness and his reiteration of his need of the isolation and suffering which would clarify his inner vision.

Dudley hinted to all the women he met that Art was his mistress and that he could not permit himself to approach them seriously without subjecting them to the injustice of this rivalry. The physical terrors of his childhood had aggravated his caution. His inward distress was terrible when he was obliged to reconcile his resistance to the world outside him with the ideal of the great artist which commanded him to abandon himself to all that came. His desire,

even as regarded material things, was to hoard everything that contributed to the erection of a barrier between him and the ruthless struggle of men. He longed for commercial success, and he displayed an ostentatious indifference to the salableness of his work. He had a physical attachment for his possessions.

He hated gatherings of all sorts unless they were of friends who would respond to all he had to say and whom he might insidiously dominate. Yet he had encountered Julia first at the home of Mrs. Hurst, whose bourgeois pretensions to esthetic interest he despised. These heterogeneous assemblies gave him the cold impression of a mob. Anything which affected him and at the same time evaded him was unadmittedly alarming. He had not appeared at his best that night until he was able to lead Julia aside and talk to her alone. Then he became suddenly at ease. There was a slightly bitter humility about her confessions of ignorance that made him feel her potentially appreciative in a genuine sense.

Strangely enough the frankness of her self-depreciation disarmed him. He felt that he must search for a hidden pretension that would show her weak and allow him an approach. Wherever she displayed

symptoms of confidence he confronted her with her dependence on illusion. He told himself that all that one individual owed another was the means to truth. Believing in the dignity of self-responsibility, he could not assume the burden of Julia's discouragement. He imagined her unhappy. If he helped her to see herself he was aiding her to attain the only ultimate values in life.

After he and Julia became lovers he was troubled not a little by the necessity for concealment, for he had told her so frequently that her relation to Laurence had been falsified by the accumulation of reserves.

DUDLEY had said so often that he considered Laurence a repressed and misunderstood man that Julia, with an antagonism which she did not confess to herself, asked her lover to dine at her home. Meeting Dudley as Laurence's wife again put her on the offensive regarding everything that concerned her house and the usual circumstances of her existence. She had never taken such care in composing a meal as she did for this occasion, and she spent half an hour arranging the flowers in a low bowl on the table.

When Dudley came he greeted Laurence with peculiar eagerness. Julia found it hard to forgive her lover for making himself ridiculous.

During dinner the guest led the talk which was exclusively between the two men. He insisted on discussing bacteriological subjects with Laurence. Laurence deferred politely to Dudley's ignorance.

The large room in which they sat was lighted by the candles at either end of the long table. The glow, like a bright shadow, was reflected in the dark woodwork and against the obscure walls. Through the tall open windows the wind brought the warm night in with a soft rush of blackness. Then the pale candle flames flattened into fans and the wax slipped with a hiss into the burnished holders.

Laurence was humped in his chair as usual, so that the rough collar of his coat rose up behind against his neck. Most of the time as he talked he stared straight before him; but occasionally he glanced with his small pained eyes into Dudley's engrossed and persistent face.

Julia saw with unusual clearness everything that Laurence said and did. She was possessively aware of his gestures, and when he spoke easily and fluently of his work she had a proprietary satisfaction

in it, and was full of animosity toward Dudley's questioning.

She felt betrayed by Dudley, who approached Laurence by ignoring her mediumship. She could not bear the admission of Dudley's power to exclude her. They could only live in each other. She gave him life in her, but he obliterated her from himself, and so condemned her to a sort of death. And while she was dead he gave Laurence her life. She was dead and alone with her body that was so alive. She felt her breasts swelling loathsomely under her crisp green muslin dress, and her long hidden legs stretched horribly from the darkness of her hips. Her live body possessed her stupidly. If only he would take it from her! If only with one glance he would admit her to himself!

As they passed from the dining room Julia touched Laurence despairingly. He saw her worried smile. "You're warm, dear," she said. And she added, "I wonder how our children fared upstairs, eating alone in state." She wanted to compel Laurence into the atmosphere of domestic intimacies where her guest had no part.

"I wonder." He returned her smile abstractedly

and spoke to Dudley again. "You know Weissman of Berlin—"

Julia looked unconsciously tragic and bit her lip. "Have you been able to arrange for your exhibition, Dudley?" she interrupted demandingly. Her voice was sharp.

"Why, no—" Dudley glanced at her with pleasant interrogation. "You were saying—about Weissman?" He was naïve like a child unconscious of rudeness.

When they came to the staircase Laurence went on ahead because of the light. Dudley took Julia's arm, bare to the elbow. She shuddered away from him. She was observing his strut, the way he walked, his weight bearing on his heels. When the glow from the upper hall fell on them she saw his short arms held stiffly at his sides, the black down clinging on his wrists and the backs of his hands, the twinkle of his crisp reddish mustache that appeared artificially imposed on his small, almost womanish, face, and the thick black curls, soft and a little oily, that clung about his ill-formed head. She disliked even the careful carelessness of his dress.

But her loathing of him was after all only horror

of herself. If he had given her a look of acceptance she would have become one with him. Then it would have been impossible to see him so separately. She wanted to explain the horror to him. If he had known her thoughts he could not have endured them, and he would have saved them both.

But he was separate and satisfied in himself. "Julia," he said in a low voice, "Laurence Farley is a remarkable person. There is something in the dignity of his reserve that puts us to shame. My God, what a tragedy he is! He interests me tremendously. I'm grateful to you for letting me know him."

Julia felt hateful that he presumed to tell her this. She had always spoken gratefully of Laurence. She had much pride in her pain in never finding excuses for herself.

"He isn't sophisticated in our sense," Dudley said, "but he makes me feel that there is something puerile and immature in both of us."

Julia said, in a hard voice, "I don't think I have ever failed in appreciation of Laurence." Suddenly she realized that both these men were strangers to her, that she loved and wanted only herself. Her despair was so complete that it relieved her, and she could scarcely hold back the tears.

DUDLEY wanted to despise Laurence. There was something in the personality of Julia's husband which defied contempt. If Laurence had displayed any crass desire for recognition Dudley would have passed him by with relief; but the artist wished to force all sensitive natures to admit that their secrets could not be hidden.

Laurence's regard for Julia was full of the condescension of maturity. He gave to her where it was impossible for him to take. Dudley had always despised her a little, and now the fact that her husband excluded her from his suffering was testimony of her inadequacy. Without admitting it to himself, Dudley was beginning to resist being associated with her. He reflected that it was grotesque to dream of finding understanding in such a struggling and incomplete nature. Julia was possessive. The heroic woman must rise above this instinct.

Her breasts were a little old, her body thin. He remembered the angularity of her hips, the too long line of her back. He saw her eyes uplifted to his with that pained, withheld look which annoyed him so much. Her skin was very white, but a little coarse. When she put her arms about him her hair, all disarranged, fell wild and heavy about her

strained throat. He did not wish to admit that he had discovered his mistress to be less beautiful than, in the beginning, he had imagined her. He revolted against these obvious judgments of the senses. It was unpleasant to recall her so distinctly. He pitied her mental incompleteness which made it impossible to give her the purer values which he wanted to share with her.

Dudley congratulated himself on a curiously sensitive understanding of what Laurence had endured. To escape the unpleasant vision of Julia's body and the dumb gaze which fatigued him so much he concentrated all his reflections on his magnanimous sympathy for the man.

He felt that face to face with Julia he would never be able to explain to her what he perceived in regard to her husband, so he wrote her a letter about it. "Laurence Farley is our equal, Julia," he wrote. "We owe it to ourselves to treat him as such. Now that I have had the opportunity to observe and appreciate his rare qualities I know that the relation between you and me will never fulfil its deep promise while this lie exists between you and him. The truth will be hard, but he is big enough to bear it. He is a man who has suffered from the American en-

vironment, and has been warped and drawn away from his true self. If his scientific erudition had been fostered in an atmosphere which loved learning for its own sake. he would have been able to express himself. He has the ripe nature of a *savant*. I feel that meeting with you both has a rare meaning for me. We must all suffer in this thing. Perhaps he most, except that I must suffer alone. You and he are close—in spite of everything you are close. Closer perhaps than even you and I have been. But I must learn, Julia. I am struggling yet. I have farther to go than he has, in spite of my superior knowledge of certain things, of worlds of which he has never become cognizant. I have not yet learned as he has to rise above myself. In my slow way I shall do so. I shall learn, Julia, and you shall help me—you two people. I want him to be my friend. I respect him. I love you both. Oh, Julia, how deeply, deeply I have loved you."

When Dudley had dispatched this letter he found himself liberated from many obscure depressions that had been hampering his spirit. The important thing in Julia's life was her relation to Laurence. He, Dudley, would accept the fact that he was only an incident in her struggle to achieve herself.

Yet he was disconcerted by the premonition that her interpretation of what he had done would not be his. He was in furtive terror of being made ridiculous.

THROUGH the tall, open windows of the dining room, Julia, seated with some mending, could see the dull line of the roofs in the next street, and the dreary sky shadowed with soiled milky-looking clouds. The grass in the back yard was a bright dead green. It had grown tall. Flurries of moist acrid wind swept across it, and it bent all at once with a long, undulant motion that was like voluptuous despair. The table cloth rose heavily and fell in a spent gesture against the legs under it. Julia's black muslin dress beat gently about her ankles.

Then the wind passed. The grass blades were fixed and still. In the silent room the ticking of a small clock on a *secrétaire* sounded labored and blatant. The odor of the cake that Nellie was baking filled the warm air.

Julia heard the postman's whistle and Nellie's heavy step in the hall. Julia thought of Nellie, of the old woman's sureness and silence—a lean old savage woman of many lovers. In all the years that

the old Negress had been there she had never showed the need of a confidant. Her children had abandoned her and she had no tie with any human creature save the old man whom she supported who came sometimes to do odd chores.

Julia wondered what had poisoned the white race and given it the need of sanction from some outside source. She wanted a justification of herself, but did not know from what quarter she should demand it.

Nellie entered with a letter and Julia, recognizing the handwriting at once, left it on the table without opening it. As long as the letter lay on the table unknown she controlled its contents.

She turned her back to it and watched the branches of the elm tree, which were stirring again, heavily and ceaselessly, against the fence. Her needle pricked her finger and a rust-colored stain spread in the bit of lace which she was mending. The sun burst through the clouds and the room was filled with the shadowless glare, and with moist intense heat.

Julia suddenly took up the letter and tore it open with a nervous jerk. She dropped her needle.

Where it fell on the polished floor it made a tinkling sound like a falling splinter of glass.

She did not question or analyze Dudley's statement of his mood. All she knew was that he was flinging her away from him into herself. There was something composed and final about the letter. When she reread it, it overcame her with helplessness. The lie she had lived in had burdened her, and she could not justify her resentment of the suggestion that she tell the truth.

LATER in the day Dudley called Julia on the telephone. He wanted to arrange a meeting with her. He refused to admit to himself that the strained note he observed in her voice caused him uneasiness. He had to prove to himself his complete conviction of the righteousness of what he demanded of her. He suggested a walk in the park, and Julia experienced a resentful pang of exultance because she imagined that he was not strong enough to have her come to his rooms. She contemplated, as a means of defiance, taking him too much at his word.

WHITE clouds filled with gray-brown stains flowed over the hidden sky. Here and there the clouds broke and the aperture dilated until

it disclosed the deep angry blue behind it. In the center of the park the lake, cold and lustrous like congealing oil, swelled heavily in the wind, but now and again lapsed with the weight of a profound inertia. The trees, with tossing limbs, had the same oppressed and resisting look as they swung toward the water above their dying reflections.

Julia, seated on a bench away from the path, waited for Dudley to come. When she saw him far off all of her rose against him. She could not hate him enough. She subsided into herself like the cold lustrous water drawn toward its own depths. She felt bitter and shriveled by desperation. She was unhappy because she could not, at this moment, love herself.

Dudley was disconcerted by his own excitement as he approached her. There was something spiritually *gauche* in the exaggerated simplicity of his manner. He knew that his affectionate smile was an attempt to disarm her, and that his combative and questioning eyes showed his uneasiness. It was hard for him to forgive her when she made him feel absurd like this. A guilty sensation overpowered him. He considered the emotion unwarranted, attributed it to her suggestion, and held it against her

as a grudge. At this instant he could allow her no equality so he made himself feel kind. "Dear!" He took her cold fingers in his moist plump hand. Their unresponsiveness pained him. He dropped them and went on smiling at her interrogatively. "I had to talk to you," he said at last. His voice was subdued. His smile disappeared. He recognized that he was depressed and wounded.

Julia wanted to ask him what he expected her to do with her life after she had told Laurence everything, and it was no longer possible for them to live in the same house. She had greeted Dudley. Now her mouth took a sarcastic twist and she found herself unable to speak. She stared straight at the lake, which was beginning to twinkle with cold lights under the gray luminous sky. She shivered when Dudley seated himself beside her.

Before he could tell her what was in him, he had to harden himself. "I'm suffering deeply, Julia. You are suffering. I see it. It is only the little person who doesn't suffer. Why do you resent me? Life is always making patterns. It has thrown us three—you and me, and your husband—into a design—a relationship to each other. No matter what happens we ought to be glad. We may come to

mean terrific things to each other, Julia—all three of us. This is a new experience. We mustn't be afraid of it." When he noted her set profile he felt querulous toward her, but he controlled himself and tried to take her hand again. If she had protested in argument he might have talked to her about the strong soul's right to truth, and made clearer to himself what, in the darkness of his own spirit, he had to confess was still a little vague.

Julia glanced at him. Her gaze was steady and bewildered. "Of course I owe it to Laurence. I want to talk to Laurence. I would have done this of my own free will. I loathe the lie I've been living!" She spoke coldly and vehemently. Tears came into her eyes and she averted her face.

Dudley was silent a moment. He twisted his mustache and one of his small bright eyes squinted nervously. He could not bear the pride of her mouth. At the moment all pride seemed ugly to him. It was impossible to call further attention to his pain in the contemplation of renouncing her while she continued to maintain, almost vindictively, it appeared, her readiness to abandon herself to him.

"I can't put what I feel into words, Julia, but it is something very beautiful and deep. Come,

sister, you're not angry with me?" Again he took her stiff hand in his. She was humiliating him and he would not forget it.

Julia wished that she could hurt him in a way which would make it impossible for him to talk to her so kindly. She did not understand why the recognition of his absurdity made her suffer so much.

Dudley had been floundering inwardly through the attempt to avoid facing the ridiculous. Watching the harsh bitter line of her lips, he noticed the pulse that swelled and fluttered in her throat. The sight of her pain, for which he was responsible, made him feel all at once very sure and complete. He accepted no burden from it, for he told himself it was a part of her awakening to detached and perfect understanding. He was grateful to himself that he had an ideal notion of what she might be that held him cruelly and steadily against all that she was. He felt voluptuously intimate with her emotions. He could not hurt her enough. He tried to shut out the recollection of her beautiful gaunt body in its almost tragic nakedness. "I don't expect you to understand me completely yet, Julia. One's vision is so warped and tortured by one's desire. All our terminology of good and bad we use in such

a limited personal sense. We have to get away from that before we can even begin to function spiritually—to be spiritually at rest. I feel that there are clouds between us, Julia, but behind them is the great sun of your understanding. I believe in that. Say something to me!"

Julia withdrew her hand. "What can I say to you? I am in the habit of viewing problems very concretely. Let me go. I must go." She stood up, smiling at him desperately.

He wanted to destroy the smile behind which she was trying to hide, and to explain to her that the torture he caused her was the price of his very nearness. It had been almost a pleasure for him to feel her hand twitch with repugnance. It was sad that she comprehended so little of his nature. Yet he was sensible of the helplessness of hatred. Knowing that she hated him, for the first time he ceased to fear her and could give himself to uncalculated reactions toward her. He thought that if she were to remain his mistress in a conventional relation he could not love her like this. The artist was, after all, he told himself, like the priest, the mediator between the life of mankind and its mystical source.

But Julia moved away without looking at him. He watched her pass along the edge of the lake, where threads of light as fine as hairs were drawn hot and trembling across the colorless water.

Dudley continued to feel embarrassment in his own soul, for he could not clearly explain to himself the impulses which were governing his acts. He decided that only through his art would he be able to justify all that he was when, at the moment of giving Julia back to herself, he was conscious of possessing her most intensely. He was at his ease only in the midst of powerful abstractions. There was something elephantine about his nature that prevented him from being simple or casual in his moods. If he ever indulged in expressions that were light or commonplace he was suspicious of his own appearance. He was startled sometimes when he had to admit the maliciousness of his reactions toward the smaller souls around him. If he laughed in a gay group his laughter sounded awkward and strained. Perhaps it was because of his small effeminate stature that he felt it necessary to hurt people before he could command their respect.

At this moment the conviction of his power filled

him with an intoxication of gentleness. He felt that he enveloped Laurence and Julia as if in the same embrace. That he was beginning to have a peculiar affection for Laurence proved to him the significance of his own unique spirit. Realizing completely that neither Julia nor her husband could approach his understanding, he loved them for their inferiority. As he walked along the path toward the blank glare where the sun was setting among black branches, he noticed a terrier puppy rolling in the polished grass, and had for it something of the same emotion. He loved everything in relation to which he found himself in a position of advantage. Approaching thus he believed he could preserve a philosophic detachment while perceiving what Spinoza called "the objective essence of things."

PART II

MAY went to see her Grandmother Farley. May dreaded the visit. When she arrived there she sat in the dining room, smiling and listening to her grandmother's talk, and feeling small and mindless as she had felt as a child. In the old Farley home May was always like that, like something asleep possessed by itself in a shining unbroken dream. She wanted to get back to Aunt Julia, who took her life out of her and showed it to her so that she knew the shape of its thoughts.

Old Mrs. Farley gave May cookies from the cake box, and Grandpapa Farley, who did not go to his office any longer, took his granddaughter into the back yard and showed her his vegetable garden. He was kindly too, but, when this tall stooping elderly man with his handsome white head looked with vague eyes at her, she fancied that he also was asleep and could not see her. She was a little frightened of her silly thoughts about him. Aunt Julia could have told her what she wanted to say.

"And how is your father?" Grandmama Farley asked in a dry voice. "We can't expect him to come to see us very often. His wife is so busy with clubs and movements she has no time for us and I suppose he can't leave her."

May was cautious and timid in the presence of her grandmother. There was something obscure and remote about the old woman's engrossed face, her squinting eyes that gazed at one as from an infinitely projected distance, her puckered lips with their self-righteous twist. May smiled helplessly, not knowing how to reply.

"I suppose Mrs. Julia is bringing you up to have the wider interests she talks about when she is here. You want to vote, I suppose, don't you?" Mrs. Farley squinted a smile. Her humor had an acrid flavor.

May giggled apologetically. "I don't think I care much about voting, Grandmother. I don't think Aunt Julia is trying to make me like anything in particular."

"I'm making bread. Your grandfather has to have his bread just right," Mrs. Farley said. She went into the kitchen.

May hesitated, then followed her.

The clean room was full of sunlight. Mrs. Farley took down the bread pans and began to work the stiff dough on a floured board. Her knotted fingers sank tremulously into the bulging white stuff. The dough made a snapping noise when she turned it and patted it. "I suppose it would be a waste of time for you to learn to make bread, May."

Behind the old lady the stove was dazzling black with its brilliant nickel ornaments. The tin flour sifter on the table beside her was filled with fiery reflections. The stiff white muslin curtains before the open windows made lisping, scraping noises as the wind folded them over and brushed them along the lifted panes. Mrs. Farley glanced from time to time at May, and, with dim hostility, noted the slight angular little figure seated so ill-at-ease on the rush-bottomed chair, the darkened eyes with their chronic expression of melancholy and elation, the heavy braid of flaxen hair that hung with a curious soft weight between the small stooping shoulders. Mrs. Farley found May's continual smile, her sweet relaxed lips and the large uneven white teeth that showed between, peculiarly irritating. "You want another cake, eh?" she flung out at last with an amused resigned air. Going back into the

dining room, she brought a cake and presented it as though she were feeding a hungry puppy.

May, trying to be grateful, munched the cake uncomfortably. She pulled feebly at the hem of her skirt. Her grandmother made her ashamed of her legs.

Grandpapa Farley came up the walk and halted in the back doorway, bareheaded in the warm sunshine. He was in his shirt sleeves. Beads of perspiration stood on his high blank brow which might have been called noble. His big hands, smeared with the earth of the garden, hung in a helpless manner at his sides. He smiled uncomfortably at May. "Shall we send your step-mother some lettuce?"

May rose and walked out to where he waited. His expression had grown suddenly ruminant, and, as he stared away from her over the back fence, his eyes were cloudy and unseeing. "Well, May, I can't say she's done her duty by your grandmother, but she's a fine woman—fine handsome woman. Laurie was lucky to get her. She'll be able to do a lot for him." He sighed as though he were relinquishing a vision, and, glancing once more at May, became kindly aware of her again.

May had hoped that Aunt Alice would not come

downstairs, but there she was behind them. Grandpapa Farley was uncomfortable if Alice came into a room when outsiders were present. He saw her now, and, with a guilty smile, told May he would go to gather his little present. He shambled down the walk. The sunshine made his bald head lustrous. There was a glinting fringe of white hair at its base.

"So it's you, May, is it? How are you? Does Madame Julia think you are safe with us now?" There was queer hostile pleasure in Aunt Alice's fat face.

May's mouth bent with its usual smiling acceptance, but she could not keep the solemn arrested look of wonder from her eyes. People said Aunt Alice was odd. There was nothing so strange in what Aunt Alice said. It was more in something she didn't say but seemed always to have meant. "I'm well." May squeezed her fingers nervously together.

Aunt Alice laid her hand on her niece's head and tilted it back. May shivered a little and her eyelids trembled against the light. "Suppose you're living the larger life? Imbibing the fine flavor of contemporary culture, are you?"

May giggled evasively and wagged her head under the heavy hand.

"Your step-mother can't stand this congenial atmosphere so she sends you. She's strong for the true, the beautiful, and the good. Developing your father's character. Teaching him to flower, is she?"

May grew bewildered and rather sick. When she opened her eyes she caught such a cruel secret expression in Aunt Alice's face. Why does Aunt Alice always hate me? She moved her head from Aunt Alice's hand and gazed at the burnt grass rocking in the sunshine. She tried to be happy and amused.

"Can't look at her, eh?" Aunt Alice said suddenly. "Don't wonder, May. Ugly old bitch. Did you ever hear of the power and the glory without end?"

There were tears trembling on May's lashes. She gave Aunt Alice a quick stare and laughed.

Aunt Alice was examining her cautiously. "You're something of a milksop, May. Keep on being a milksop. The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. But your legs are too thin. You'll never attain to joy without end with those legs."

May did not want to understand what this meant.

Something inside her was trembling and lacerated. She stared directly at Aunt Alice now, determined not to see her clearly. She could not bear to do so.

And Aunt Alice's face was calm and kind, resigned and humorous, her eyes as steady as May's. "Your old aunt is an eccentric creature, May."

"I don't think so," May said with confused well-meaning.

Grandpapa Farley was calling from the garden. May was glad to run away to him.

IT was a long way home—almost to the other end of town. May felt the distance interminable.

When she reached the house she rushed upstairs to Aunt Julia's room. Aunt Julia was sitting there doing nothing at all. She glanced up with a tired, distracted air as May came in. May smiled ecstatically, rushed over to Aunt Julia, threw her arms about her, and in a moment was weeping with her head in Aunt Julia's lap.

Julia's fingers moved through May's soft hair that was so thick and beautiful. She pitied herself that May was so young. May's youth seemed loathsome and repugnant to her. Because of her loathing, she

made her voice more gentle. "What's the matter, sweet? Did something unpleasant happen at your grandmother's house?"

"N-no, nothing. Only I wanted to get away from there. I'm so glad to be here!"

Aunt Julia's fingers moved stiffly through May's hair. Why should I dislike this child! Oh, I'm dying of loneliness! Julia felt that she could love no one and that she deserved endless commiseration for her lovelessness. "Don't cry, darling!" Aunt Julia's voice was harsh. "I should never have let you go there. I know how depressing it is. Your Aunt Alice is such a pathetic person, isn't she? I know. I know. She isn't precisely mad, but so dreadfully unhappy. Such a morbid, isolated life."

"She makes me so—so—I don't know! Was she always like that? I used to be afraid of her when I was small."

"Perhaps so. I don't know, dear. Some man she was in love with, they say. We won't think about her. When I first married your father I tried to get her interested in some of the things I was doing at the time, but she imagines that every one dislikes her. Now don't cry any more, May, child. You mustn't let your poor father see how

your visit has upset you. He never wants us to go there, but I think we ought. Old Mr. Farley is such a kind old man and your grandmother was so good to the little baby that died. Your father has often told me about it. He is grateful to her for it, I'm sure, though she never understood him and when he was there with you children he was very miserable. That's one reason I wanted him to move so far away. I hate for him to have that atmosphere about him. It makes him think of your poor little mother, too. You know she was only a girl when she died. Not much more of a woman than you are, May. I don't think she understood your father very well either, but he loved her very much. It was such a pity she died. Seemed so useless." Julia was pained by her own kind words. The malice in her heart hurt her. She felt that if people were compassionate they could find the apology for her emotion which she was not able to discover.

May was gazing up solemnly with tear smudges on her face. Aunt Julia's beautiful long hand pushed the damp locks away from the girl's high pearl-smooth forehead. "Oh, Aunt Julia, I love you! I love you! I love you!"

"I'm glad, dear." Aunt Julia looked consciously

sad and stared at the carpet. Her fingers continued their half-mechanical caress.

Suddenly May sprang to her feet, clapped her palms together, and began to pirouette. Then she ran to Aunt Julia and kissed her again. "I'm so happy!" In herself she was still recalling Paul's kisses, and in them escaping the old terror that had possessed her again in her grandmother's house.

Julia, convicted of her own brutality, regarded May pityingly.

THE last semester was over. Paul, carrying his books under his arm, slouched out of the High School yard, his cap pulled over his face.

Hell! Those kids! What if he had flunked in several things! He had just left a group who were betting on next year's football eleven. Next year by mid-season it would be a college or a business school for him. When he talked to those boys he tried to joke as they did about life and "smut". He was only really interested in what they said when they talked "smut". Then he looked at them curiously and wanted to be like them.

Like them! Good Lord! They were donkeys. Even the ones who sailed beyond him in their classes.

He wanted them to know what he was—that his views were outrageous. But there was Felix, a short brown little monkey, a Russian Jew with excited far-seeing eyes, who enjoyed debating. He said Paul's vision was warped by his personal problem. Paul tried to make Felix talk about women. Felix blushed slightly, while his eyes, bright and remote, remained fixed unwaveringly on Paul's face. Felix said he respected women as the mothers of the race. He thought the boys at school had cheap ideas about sexual laxity. That he never was so utterly strong and possessed of himself as when he put women out of his mind. Then he could give his whole soul to humanity.

Paul blushed, yet sneered. Felix! Women! That brat! "Is your father a tailor or an undertaker, Felix?" Afterward it hurt Paul to remember the wrong idea of himself which he had been at such pains to impart. It would be nice to belong somewhere!

Away from the deserted schoolhouse, Paul strolled into the park. Against the gleaming afternoon sky that was a dim milky blue, the trees were shivering. He watched whirling oak leaves that looked black on the high branches. Stretched on the grass tops,

silver spider threads twitched with reflections. The bright grass, bending, seemed to rush before him like a blown cloud. Deep blots of shadow were on the lake, where, here and there, taut strands of light sparkled and broke through the shaken surface.

May's step-mother. He kept trying to push that woman away, crowding up to him with her sanctimonious face. He wanted to do violence to something. He hated himself.

When he sat down on the grass and closed his eyes he thought again of going away. Already he could feel himself inwardly small, like a speck in distance. The harshly coruscated sea made a boiling sound on the stern of the ship. Beyond the blue-black strip of water that made his eyes ache there was a long thin beach with tiny houses on it. He could hear the dry rustle of leaves and cocoanut fronds. There was rain in the air and huge masses of plum-colored cloud made a strange darkness far off over the aching earth. A man in a red shirt ran along the shore, following, waving something. Then all in a moment it had become night and there was nothing but the hiss of the sea in the quietness. The glow from a lamp made a yellow stain on the

mist and showed a half-naked sailor asleep on his side with his head thrown back.

When Paul saw things like this he was never certain where the vision came from. He wondered if he had made it himself, or if it were only something he had read about. The sharpness of his dream pleased and frightened him.

He slung his books to one side and buried his face in his hands. He was miserably conscious of his big grotesque body which he wanted to forget. Saving the world. Karl Marx. Men that go down to the sea in ships. Shipped away from here. Shipped as a sailor. He shook himself without lifting his face. He did not want to hate May, so he hated Aunt Julia instead.

White moon blown across his face. It was there when he glanced up. It floated down through the park trees. Why was it when he thought of May he saw beautiful full breasts like moons in flower! They floated before him like lilies. They were in him like the vision of the ship.

A brown barefooted girl walked toward a hilltop, a water jar poised on her head. The sky into which she went was like a dove's wing. Sunset already. And the girl with the water jar kept mounting and

going down, down, down into him, into darkness. He could hear the quiet grass parting against her feet. He could hear her going into the moon, into darkness, into the vacant sky beyond the trees.

He took his hands away from his face and gathered up his books.

I must instinctively feel something rotten about that step-mother of May's or I wouldn't have this unreasoning antagonism. The brown girl passed out of sight on the imaginary meadow. He stared at an overturned park bench, and at the lake water that made a stabbing spot of emptiness in the glowing twilight among the trees.

JULIA'S depression continued during the evening meal and Laurence noticed her silence. In the hallway, as they went up to her sitting room after dinner, he surprised her by slipping his arm about her shoulders.

Julia glanced toward him swiftly. Her mouth was strained. She smiled and lowered her lids.

"Being married to me isn't a thrilling experience, Julia."

Julia tried to answer him, bit her lips, and said, "Dear!" in a choked voice.

He held her against him uneasily as they walked. Julia wished he would not touch her as if he were afraid.

When they mounted the stairs they found her room dark. Laurence released her and she went ahead of him to find the light. The moon made a long blue shadow that lay alive on the floor. The bright windows of the houses opposite seemed to flicker with the moving branches of the trees that came between. The night air of the city flowed cold into the room and had a dead smell. They heard the horn of a motor car and children were laughing in the street. Julia was shivering, fumbling for the electric lamp.

Laurence, though he barely saw the outline of her figure, was suddenly aware of something confused and ominous in her delay. "What's the matter, Julia? Do you need my help?" His tone was very casual but gentle. He startled himself. She's unhappy. I need to be kind. He had been restless, feeling something between them. She must come to me. He had a quick sense of relief and tenderness.

The light rushed out and bathed the indistinct walls. The carpet was bleached with it. There

was a circle of radiance low about the desk where the lamp stood. Julia had not answered. Her shoulders, turned to him, resisted him. Her head was bent forward, away. She was moving some papers under a book. Her bare hand and arm appeared startlingly alive, saffron-colored in the glow, trembling out of the dim blackness of her sleeve. There were blanched reflections in the lighted folds of her silk skirt.

Laurence was all at once afraid, as if he had never seen her before. "Julia!" He moved a step toward her.

She turned to him, her hands behind her, palms downward on the desk against which she braced herself. Her face was old. Her eyes, staring at him, seemed blind.

Laurence frowned while his lips twitched in a queer smile. He tried to speak, but could not. Without knowing why, he wanted to keep her from speaking.

She buried her face in her hands. "I have something horrible to tell you, Laurence."

Her voice, unexpectedly calm, disconcerted him. Neither had she intended to speak like that. She wanted her emotions to release her. She wanted to

be confused. The clearness of the instant terrified her.

Laurence could not ask her what it was. Something hurt him at that moment more than she could ever hurt him afterward. He wanted the silence, unendurable as it was, to go on forever.

Silence.

He came to her and took her hands from her eyes. It was hard for him to touch her. Her lids closed. She turned her head aside.

"What's the matter, Julia? What's happened? Have I done anything to hurt you? Tell me."

He seemed to her so far away that she felt it useless to answer him. Everything that had happened was deep inside her. Neither Laurence nor Dudley had any relation to it. She knew herself too deeply. It was the unknown self from which gods were made. There was nothing to turn to. There was nothing more to know. She watched Laurence now and felt a foolish smile on her lips. Her hard, concentrated gaze noted nothing about him. "I've behaved disgustingly, Laurence."

Laurence watched her. He let his hands fall away. He wanted never to know what she was going to say. His eyes were on the soft hair against

her cheek. He had the impulse to kiss her there. He hated her already for the pain of what she was taking away from him. Some helpless thing in him wanted her and she was killing it cruelly and senselessly. It was monstrous to take her soft hair and her cheek away from him.

"I've deceived you, Laurence. I've been carrying on an intrigue without telling you." Her brows were painfully drawn above her blind hard gaze. Her smile suggested a sneer at its own agony. "I've had a lover."

Laurence flushed slowly and regarded her with a dim stare of suffering and dislike. He could not conquer the impression that her manner was victorious. He felt that he must ask who her lover was. He thought that she was degrading him when she made him ask it. "Yes?" His voice sounded excited, yet calm, almost elated. The voice came from a strange mouth.

"Dudley Allen," Julia said, and kept the same unhappy, irrational smile.

"How long did this go on before you made up your mind to tell me? I can forgive you everything but that, Julia. Why didn't you tell me? You're a free agent. I have nothing to say about your ac-

tions, but I don't think you had any right to lie to me, Julia." He tried to keep his mind on the point of justice. He was utterly vanquished and weak. To touch her! To be near to her! He felt her putting things between them so that he could never touch her. His mouth was sweet. His suffused eyes had an expression of stupidity and anguish.

Julia, observing him, all at once relaxed, and, with a bewildered air, began to weep, hiding her face again. He envied the sobs which shook her with relief. She sank into a chair.

"Don't, Julia. You mustn't do this, Julia. Don't!" He came up to her, and, with an effort, touched her drooped head. The contact was grateful to him. Her warm shuddering body reassured him against the dark they were in. They were both in the same darkness. He wanted to know her in it where her bright empty words had pierced and gone.

"How can you bear to touch me?" Julia said. She demanded nothing. Helpless and waiting, she was clinging to him. Her legs were warm and weak and tired. She was glad of the chair, and only in

terror that Laurence might go. "Don't leave me, Laurence! Please don't leave me!"

"I won't leave you, Julia." For a moment he pitied her, but suddenly he knew how much outside her he was. She was taking no account of him at all. He needed to resist her as if she were some awful weight. He was so tired. She was crushing him. He wanted to live. He wanted to be away from her. "I want to go—not far—out somewhere. I want to be alone for a while. I have to think things out."

"I know, Laurence! You can't bear me! I've killed what you had for me!"

He was annoyed by her unthinking phrases, and that she showed no knowledge of the new emotion which pain had created in him. It was hard to leave her in distress, but he felt that he must go to save himself.

He left the room quietly, and went downstairs and into his study. The house was still, perhaps empty, but he closed the door after him and locked it. He was afraid of his own room with its unfamiliar walls.

He sat down awkwardly in the darkness, aware of his own movements as of the gestures of some one

else. He conceived a peculiar disgust for the short heavy man who was humped soddenly in the arm-chair. He disliked the man's clothes, expensive ill-fitting clothes draping a massive body. Most of all he hated the man's small delicate hands, ridiculous below his big sleeves.

Laurence, out of his own fatigue, had abandoned the moral idea, and he pleased himself now with the bitter lenience of his judgment. He had known for a long time that Julia was dissatisfied and had even sensed the pathos in her passing enthusiasms with their glamour of profundity. He had seen her young and lovely, futile except to him, and, when he had pitied her passion for the sublime, it had only added a paternal quality to his feeling for her, so that he loved her more inwardly and quietly. His unshaken pessimism regarding life had made him more and more gentle of her when he saw that she yet clung to the things which, for him, had failed. He perceived now that his very disbelief had been the symbol of a too complete faith which she had made grotesque. If he had been able to condemn her, the moral justification would have afforded him an emotional outlet. He was helpless with a hurt that was his alone.

Who was he, he said ironically to himself, that he should refuse the lie with which humanity sustains itself.

DUDLEY wrote Julia that he was grieved that she excluded him from her confidence. He was suffering deeply and he wanted to be a friend to both her and Laurence. He had not anticipated anything like her silence.

When his vanity was wounded he made a fetish of his isolation. He told himself that he had no place in the superficiality of modern life. He took a train away from the city and walked along the beach under the hot gray sky beneath clouds like glaring water. He wanted to avoid his artist friends. He wished to imagine that they could never understand him. He was acute in his perception of their weaknesses and was always defending himself inwardly against discovering their defects in himself.

He tired himself out and, taking off his coat, sat down on some driftwood to rest. His black hair clung in sweated curls to his flushed forehead. The pine boughs above him rocked secretly against the glowing blindness of the clouds. The bunches of needles, lustrous on the tips of the branches, were

like black stars. The sea was a moving hill going up against the horizon. It made a slow heavy sound. The small waves sidled along the shore, opened their fluted edges a little, fan-wise, then flattened themselves and sank away with lisping noises.

Dudley was more and more depressed by the constant terrible fear of having made himself ludicrous. He said to himself that neither Julia nor her husband would understand him, and he must suffer the miscomprehension of his motives which would inevitably result from their lesser experience. The most disconcerting thing was the sudden retrospective vividness of his physical intimacy with Julia. She seemed to have become a part of all the abhorrent elements that were commonplace in his past, elements against which his romantic conception of his destiny led him to rebel.

His full lips pouted despairingly beneath his neat mustache shining in the glare, and there was an aggrieved expression in his small sparkling eyes. His plump, pretty body made him unhappy. He tried to exclude it. It was terrible for him to realize ugliness or physical deficiency of any sort. He never associated this with his weak childhood and the semi-invalidism which he but vaguely remem-

bered. He had begun so early to detach his experiences from those of other beings, that it never occurred to him. Yet if he came in contact with disease in another creature it left him mentally ill. He never made any attempt to analyze the violence of his reaction against the sight of sickness. At any rate, his theory was of a Golden Age and a primitive man who had fallen through admitting weakness into his psychical life.

Dudley did not explain the fact to himself, but he knew that his dignity survived only in his capacity for pain of the spirit. When he was in agony of mind he never really doubted that his condition was a superior one, the travail in which the great soul gave birth to its perfection. At twenty-seven his hair was turning gray and there were lines of exhaustion and disillusionment about his eyes and mouth. He demanded so much of himself that it allowed him no spiritual quiet.

To avoid recognizing the platitudinous details of his love affairs he submitted himself to mystical tortures. He wanted to leave each incident of his existence finished and perfect as he passed through it. As much as he craved admiration, he needed gentleness, but he could not ask for it.

He remained on the beach until nightfall. He could not discover in himself enough grief to release him from the cold misery and absurdity of everyday human affairs.

BETWEEN Julia and Laurence, the reflex of their emotional fatigue expressed itself in a mutual inertia. Except that Laurence showed his desire to be alone by moving his bed into a small isolated room at the back of the house, nothing in the order of existence was changed.

Before the children, Julia spoke to him gently, almost pathetically, and only now and then dared look at his face. He tried to avoid her guilty and demanding gaze. If she caught his eyes he would glance quickly and defensively away with a contraction of his features that he could not control.

School was over. "You and the children might go for a month on the beach," Laurence said.

And Julia said, "Yes." But she did not make any definite plans. She was waiting for something which she had never named to herself.

When she was away from him in her room she went over and over the succession of events, and wondered if she should leave the house to go out

and earn her living, since she had betrayed Laurence's confidence and no longer deserved anything at his hands. She sustained the ideas of conscience to the point of applying for employment with the City Board of Health, and, some weeks after, a position was given her. But it seemed an irrelevant incident which resolved nothing.

If Laurence had imposed difficulties on her she would have justified herself in facing them. What seemed most horrible now was that everything was in suspense, and she was cheated of the emotional cleansing which relieved her in a crisis even where there were ominous consequences to follow.

Laurence made a constant effort to escape the atmosphere of anticipation which her manner created. When he was not with her he fancied he saw everything clearly. She had always been searching for something apart from him and she had found it. He decided that it was the clearness and finality of his vision of her and of himself that left him unable to create a future. Laurence thought, in language different from Julia's, that a man comes to the end of his life when he knows himself entirely. Emotion can only build on the vagueness of expectation. His complete awareness of the causes

of his state allowed him no resentments. He imagined that he could no longer feel anything toward Julia. He was conscious of the broken thing in himself. He could not feel himself going on. There was nothing but annihilating space around him. He reflected that Julia could intoxicate herself with death, and that he had no such autoerotic sense.

ONE evening, after an early dinner, May and Bobby ran out, bent on their own affairs, and left Julia and Laurence in the dining room alone. Without looking at Julia, Laurence rose. She recognized, beneath his quiet manner, the furtive haste with which she had become so painfully familiar.

She touched his coat. "Laurence?" She picked up some embroidery which lay on a chair near the table and began to thrust the needle, which had lain on it, in and out of the coarse-woven brown cloth. She stared down at her trembling fingers—at the long third finger where the thimble should be.

Laurence waited without speaking. When she touched him like that he could scarcely bear it. Her long hands and her aching, drooping shoulders were a part of him. Even the sound of her voice

was something that she dragged out of him that he found it hard to endure. He kept his head bent away from her. His mouth contorted. Frowning, he passed his fingers slowly across his face and covered his lips.

"Dudley Allen and I have separated. Everything between us seems to have been a mistake. I didn't know whether I had made you understand that." Her voice was weak, almost whispering. As she watched her needle she pricked herself and a drop of blood welled, slowly crimson, from the hand that held the cloth. She went on pushing the needle jerkily through some yellow cotton flowers. The late sunshine was pale in the room. Nellie was singing in the kitchen.

Laurence saw the blood spread on the embroidery and make a stain. He was all at once insanely amused. What she was saying seemed an absurd revelation of their distance from each other. She never considered him as distinct from herself. He found it ludicrous.

His finger tips moved along the edge of the table. He picked up a dish and set it down. In his heart he knew that Dudley was her only lover, but he was jealous of his right to suspect that it was

otherwise. It made him cruel toward her when he realized how seldom it occurred to her that he might disbelieve what she said. "That is your affair—between you and him, Julia. I'm not interested in it."

She watched him helplessly. "Laurence, why is it always like this?"

He saw her hands shaking. He wanted them to shake. All grew dim before his eyes. He turned quickly from her and walked out of the room. He could not hurt her. It was terrible not to be able to hurt her. He fancied that he hated her more because he was so unable to revenge himself for her manner of ignoring him.

He went on through the hall into the street. He knew that Julia was robbing him of the detachment in which he had taken refuge from earlier suffering. He no longer possessed himself. Not even his own pain belonged to him.

He's cast her off so she comes to me. He did not think so, but he wanted to indulge himself in this belief. He had hitherto controlled a loathing for Dudley which was unreasoning. Now he resented Dudley for Julia's sake and could despise her through this very resentment.

Julia's isolation was pathetic, yet Laurence had only to recall the physical nature of his emotion when they were together to know that he could not express his pity for her. He tried to force all intimate sense of her out of his mind. When he actually considered himself rid of her he was conscious of being bright and blank like a mirror from which the reflections are withdrawn, and there was a crazy stirring of laughter through the emptiness in him.

He passed along the neat sidewalks, his head bowed. His air of abstraction was ostentatious. He wanted to enjoy uninterruptedly the relaxation of self-loathing. There were deep, violet-red shadows on the newly-washed asphalt street. The tree-tops were still and glistening against the line of faintly gilded roofs. The grass blades on the ordered lawns were green glass along which the quiet light trickled. Well-dressed children played under the eyes of nurse maids. A limousine was drawn up in the shrubbery that surrounded a Georgian portico. Laurence decided that he was relieved by the failure which separated him from the pretensions of success.

He recalled the unhappiness of his first marriage,

and the depression he had experienced with his baby's death. It pleased him that he seemed doomed to fail in every relationship.

Alice and I are strangely alike after all. He took a grandiose satisfaction in the delayed admittance that he and Alice were alike. Wondering if Julia would ultimately leave him, he told himself that he was the one who ought to go away to save Bobby from the contamination of such bitterness.

Of May he somehow did not wish to think.

WHEN Dudley communicated with Julia over the telephone her manner was strained and resentful, and when he wrote her notes she replied to him with a reserve that showed her antagonism. His curiosity concerning her and Laurence was becoming painful. He guessed that she was in spiritual turmoil and he could not bear to be excluded from the consequences of a situation which he himself had brought about. If he could imagine himself dictating the course of her life, and of her husband's, it would not be so hard to forego that physical pleasure in her which had made him resentful of her, as of all other women. At the same time he fought off relinquishing any of himself to

her necessities. She needed to grow. She did not belong in her bourgeois environment but she must escape it alone. He told himself that later she would thank him that he had been strong for both of them.

Dudley was utterly miserable in his exclusion. He needed to appear noble in his own eyes, and to assert his superiority with all those with whom he came in contact. And this in a world which he knew had become too sophisticated to believe any longer in the sincerity of the noble gesture. In a letter to Julia he said, "Spiritually, I too am not well. My life is not yet right. I can no longer avoid the conviction that I should live alone. I am meant to have friends, but not to live with any of them. And against this hold the numberless ways in which my life is linked with the lives of others. I am in conflict and here goes much of the energy which should pour into my projected and incompleted works.

"I find that in several countries of Europe there are conscious groups of men who feel that I am doing an important work, and that there is significance in my life and thought. Is that not

strange? Is it so, or is it a freak of the pathos of distance?

"If I could only resolve this endless conflict within myself! This rending and spilling of myself in the battle of my wills to be alone and to live as others do: to be out of the world, and to be normally in it! It is a classic conflict, but no less mortal for that."

After he had sent the letter he was uncomfortable because he had written only of himself, but he dared not consider Julia's attitude. She must accept his own definition of himself and his acts.

DUDLEY was ashamed of the strength of his interest in the Farleys. When he was most in love with Julia he did not admit to his friends that she had any part in his life. Now he was determined to initiate her and Laurence into his environment. As a protest against their misunderstanding, he must force them to live through his experiences. Dudley even decided that when Julia became a part of his world it would do no harm if it became known that she had been his mistress. Before he let her go he wished the world to see

her with some ineradicable mark of himself upon her. She must accept his permanent significance in her life without wanting to be paid for it by some symbol of sexual possession. He insisted on a meeting with her. They saw each other again in the park.

The park on this damp day looked vast and abandoned. The tall buildings, visible beyond the trees, were far off, strange with mist, as if in another world. A few drops of rain fell occasionally on the heavy surface of the lake and the water flickered like gray light. The grass and the bushes around were vividly still.

Dudley walked about nervously waiting for Julia to come. He would admit no fault in his view of her and he could not explain his uneasiness. At a recent exhibition his pictures had been unfavorably criticized. He decided that he had not yet accepted the inevitableness of a life of isolation.

When he saw Julia coming along the path his eyes filled with tears. It was cruel that a woman to whom he had opened his heart had closed herself against him in enmity. He loved her as he loved everything which had been a part of himself. She was yet a part of him, though she refused to

understand it. She wounded him unmercifully. When she halted before him and looked at him he tried to forgive her. He fought back too much consciousness of his small undignified body. "Julia! Aren't you glad to see me?"

She allowed him to press her hand. They went on together, side by side. Dudley was afraid of her cold face. It made him the more determined to be generous to her and rise above what she was feeling. Psychically he wanted to touch her with himself. There was a kind of pagan chastity in her reserved suffering. Such a thing he had never been able to achieve and he could not bear it in others. "How does your husband feel about what you have told him, Julia?" His voice shook.

Julia said, "I think he's too big for both of us. He understands things that neither of us know."

Dudley would not allow himself to be jealous. He knew that he must embrace Laurence's experience in order to rise above it. "If he had the narrow outlook of the average man of his class he would condemn us both. Does he condemn me?"

"I'm sure he condemns neither of us in the sense you mean."

"I want to see him and talk to him," Dudley said.

"I want to be the friend of both of you, Julia, in a deep true sense. Will he meet me? Will he talk to me?"

With a curious shock of astonishment Julia found herself ignored again. "I don't know. Yes, I think he'll talk to you." Her white throat strained so that it was corded with tension. She bit her lips.

Dudley observed this and became elated. He told himself that sympathy drew him to her, and he wanted to kiss her. But he withheld the kiss. He could not accept the burden of Julia's deficiencies. If he made a friend of Laurence Farley it would frustrate her in her undeveloped impulses. Dudley tried to admire himself for being strong enough to resist her for the sake of something she did not comprehend and might never appreciate.

He placed his hand on her arm. "Julia, how do you feel—now—about him—about you and me?" When she met his eyes, she noted in them the old expression of impersonal intimacy which ignored all of her but what he wanted for himself. He could endure everything but her reserve. He knew that she despised him for not allowing her to suffer alone. He had to risk that. It was preferable to being excluded from a life which had belonged to

him entirely. He could not bear to return the privacy of emotion to any one who had appeared to him in spiritual nakedness.

Julia shivered under his touch. "Why do you oblige me to go through the humiliation of telling you things about myself that you already see?"

"You do love me a little, Julia?"

Julia would not look at him. "You know I love you."

He was disconcerted for the moment, resenting the mysterious implication of obligation which he always found in such words. "Sister. Julia. In the environment where I met you, I never expected to meet a woman who had your deep reality. We must all go through terrible things to come to a true understanding of ourselves in the universe. I have been through just what you are passing through now, Julia. Let me be your friend and your husband's friend as no one else has ever been?"

Julia clasped her hands and pressed the palms together. "Of course you are my friend." She wondered if her feeling of amusement were insane.

Dudley was unhappy with himself but her visible misery stimulated him in a way he dared not explain.

THE windows of Dudley's studio were open against the hot purplish night. Large, fixed stars shuddered above the factory roofs and the confusion of tenements. The still room seemed a vortex for the distant noises of the street. A fire gong clanged alarmingly. Some one whistled. Somewhere feet were shuffling and the rhythm of a bass viol marked jazz time with the savage monotony of a tom-tom's beat. There was a sinister harmony in the discordant blending of sound.

Dudley, when he opened his door to Laurence, was relieved by a sudden sense of intimate affection for the man before him.

Laurence said, "I lost my way. Have I disturbed you by coming so late?" He held out his hand with a slight air of reluctance.

Dudley was pained and rebuffed by the pleasant casual manner of his guest. He would have held Laurence's hand but that Laurence withdrew it. "I had nothing to do but wait for you," Dudley said. He took Laurence's hat and stick and drew forward a chair.

Laurence seated himself with strained ease, and scrutinized a half-finished picture that leaned on the mantel shelf opposite. "I've been reading some

references to your work lately." As he glanced away from the study, his mouth twitched slightly and his hard smiling eyes were full of an instinctive defiance.

Dudley's inquisitive imagination was fired by the recognition of the secret voluptuous relationship between them. He held Laurence's gaze with a passionate expression of understanding which to Laurence was peculiarly offensive and disturbing. "Inspired idiocy," Dudley said. "I hope you won't judge me by the banal standards which govern my other critics." His light tone, as usual, was awkwardly assumed.

"My unfailing refuge." Laurence reached in his pocket and took out his pipe. Dudley observed the tension of Laurence's hands that were too steady.

A pause.

Laurence said, "Well—your pictures are interesting. I like them. I won't subject you to my bromidic attempts at analysis. My appreciation of art is limited by my training. I'm too factual in my approach to follow the ebullitions of the modern consciousness." He glanced about the room again.

Dudley was disappointed in him, and unhappy in the way a child may be. It wounded him, that

Laurence, like Julia, persisted in excluding him by means of a false pride. "It is a great deal to me that you are ready to be my friend. Julia told me." Dudley's eyes were oppressively gentle.

Laurence did not reply at once. He looked about the room. His glance was bright with uneasiness. He pressed tobacco into the bowl of his pipe. His knuckles were white. This visit was an ordeal which the bitterness of his pride had forced him to accept. He wondered what he must do to prevent talk of Julia which he could not endure.

"It seems to me it would have been very absurd if I had refused to be your friend." He made his gaze steady as he turned to watch Dudley.

Dudley's negligee shirt was open over his chest which was beaded with sweat. His face was flushed and his hair clung darkly to his moist temples. His lips pouted slightly beneath his small glistening mustache. The expression of his eyes suggested a domineering desire for openness. He felt that already through Julia's body he knew Laurence's life. The same virginal pagan quality of pride that had to be overcome in Julia was in Laurence too. Dudley wanted to perpetrate an outrage of compassion upon it. "I realized before Julia told me that there

was a side to you altogether different from the one you show to the world."

Without knowing how to put an end to his humiliation, Laurence said, "I suppose there is in all of us. You artists have a peculiar advantage in being able to express yourselves." He put a light to his pipe, blew the smoke out, and stared at the ceiling. Whenever Dudley mentioned Julia's name Laurence wanted to repudiate the significance which it held in common for Dudley and himself. Rather than be included here, he preferred to think of Dudley and Julia together and himself as separate.

Dudley was wrapt in the conviction of a dark, almost fleshly, knowledge of Laurence, and his determination to love was as ruthless as any hatred. He never had the intimate experience of a personality without wanting, in a sense, to defile it by drawing it utterly to himself. He smiled apologetically. "We should never refuse any experience."

Laurence felt as if he were a woman whose body was being taken. He sucked at his dry pipe which was extinguished. "Perhaps it is my limitation which makes it impossible for me to receive everything so unquestioningly."

"But you do accept things."

"Not emotionally. Not in the way you mean."

Dudley realized that Julia had gone from him. His sense of loss was not merely in the loss of physical domination. Laurence was as precious as Julia had been. What was needed was a spiritual possession. Dudley's method of self-enlargement was through the absorption of others, but he had a theory of equality. His tyrannous impulses rarely persisted when equality was disproven. Without admitting it himself, he wanted to reduce his peers through his understanding of them. Then, too, on this occasion, his superior comprehension of Laurence might be proof to himself of Julia's inadequacy.

Laurence felt nothing but blind proud protest against invasion, and, when Dudley attempted to discuss their mutual interests, was furtive and adroit in defense.

MAY told Paul that she believed Aunt Julia was unhappy. He had to confess to himself that he disapproved of Aunt Julia too much to keep away from her. He wanted to go to the house where she was. But he had forgotten her work with the Board of Health, and arrived on an afternoon when she was not at home.

May took him to Aunt Julia's sitting room. He loathed the place. He disliked May when he saw her in it. And when he disliked May it made him despair. He thought that he had never in his life been so depressed.

"Aunt Julia's things are so lovely I'm always afraid of spoiling them." May sat down on the couch among the batik pillows and made a place for him beside her. Her face was blanched by the bright colors. Her short skirts drew up and showed her thin legs above her untidy shoes.

Paul seated himself at the other end and rested his head uncomfortably against the wall. "I suppose your Aunt Julia calls all these gew-gaws art." Whenever he tried to be superior some external force of evil seemed to frustrate his effort.

"Now, Paul, they're lovely!"

"I wonder how Aunt Julia relates this fol-de-rol to her soulful interest in the working class."

"But some of it's only tie dye, Paul. She did it herself out of an old dress."

Paul was baffled, but he preserved the sneer on his lips. Humming under his breath, he tilted his head back and stared at the ceiling.

"I hope you've decided not to go 'way, Paul, like

you told me last time. If you go away without telling them—your uncle and aunt—you're only eighteen—it will hurt them so." She could not look at him, for her eyes were full of tears.

Paul knew that she was suffering. Silly little thing! He went on humming, but interrupted himself to say, "Nothing but their vanity has ever been hurt by anything I've done. They want me to go on and study medicine—or law. What for? I don't care what becomes of me."

May bit her lips and twisted her fingers together. When Paul talked recklessly she knew that it was wicked because it hurt so much. It made her unhappy to be told that one needed to explain what one felt. She could not understand the thing that was good if it did not make one glad. It never occurred to her to try to justify herself before some obscure principle. Yet others had convinced her of her lack and she was in a continual state of apology toward them because so much was beyond her. She loved Aunt Julia. She wanted Paul to love her.

May wondered if Paul despised her because she never resented it when he kissed her. But the suspicion of his contempt, while it confused her, did

no more than emphasize her conviction of helplessness.

Suddenly Paul ceased humming. He leaned toward her and took her hand. She pretended not to notice, but she was happy. Her fingers in his grew cold and covered with sweat. "I think you're unkind to them, Paul." Her voice shook. There was a waiting feeling in her when he touched her.

She made him sick of himself. Silly little thing! He dropped her hand as if he had forgotten it. He was hunched forward now with his knees crossed. He watched the floor where, in the bright afternoon light, dark patches were moving. There was a curious evil expression in his furtive eyes. His hair was rumpled in a colorless thatch across his head. His mouth was babyish. "That reminds me of a story—" Paul began. He paused a moment with a flickering sneer on his lips. Aunt Julia, damn her! All of him was against May. In spite of his ugly look, his rumpled hair and childish mouth were disarming.

May was uncomfortable. She did not understand why he hesitated. "Go on."

He glanced at her and was irritated by the air of

uneasiness which came to her whenever she was uncertain. Why couldn't she laugh! Aunt Julia's brat! He wanted to punish her. She saw his uneven blush of defiance.

He began to speak quickly. "Oh, a story—about a woman and a monkey." He went on. His eyes were wicked and amused. When he had finished he whistled and gazed at the ceiling again.

May did not understand the story, but she felt that he told it to embarrass her and make her sad.

There was silence when he had done, until, with white face and strained lips, he resumed his whistling. In his irritation with her he wanted to cry. "Why don't you laugh?" he asked finally.

May blushed. Her lashes were still wet, her lips tremulous. She stuttered, "I—I can't."

He jumped to his feet and jerked up the cap he had thrown aside. "Good-by."

"Why, Paul, what's the matter? You're not going? What for?" He was halfway to the door before May recovered herself and stood up.

"I was going to meet a fellow this afternoon. I'll let you pursue your juvenile way undefiled." He hesitated, sneering, not seeing her.

May could not speak at once. "Please don't go."

When at last he glanced at her there was mist in his eyes. "Why not?" He saw that she was smiling as if across the fear that was in her look. He resented her fear and he loved her for it. Oh, little May! He loved her.

"Because—because! You were angry with me when I didn't laugh." She accused him. Why did he watch her so intently yet unseeingly? She felt his look as something which drew her inward, into herself, too deep.

"I'm not angry with you, May. Honestly, I'm not." In a dream he came near her: her thin small figure, her pointed face, her bright blank eyes, frightened and sweet. He came near her pale thick hair where it was caught away from her temples. As she turned to him he could see the end of her braid swinging below her waist. He was aware of her legs, with the straight calves that showed below her skirt, and of her breasts pointed separately through her sailor blouse. Everything that he saw was a part of something that was killing him. That was why he did not love her. She was too young. Because of this he hated her. She was like himself. He had to hate her. To save himself from the sense

of dying and being utterly lost, he had to hate her. Though it was Aunt Julia's fault. He knew that.

All those books! He had tormented himself trying to understand them. Two years ago he hid under the mattress the picture of the fat woman. Childish. He abhorred the picture of the naked woman as he abhorred his Aunt with her filthy priggishness. He remembered that long ago when he asked her something he wanted to know she called him a dirty little boy. Poor kid! He was sorry for himself. It was all a part of Julia and the world and something that was killing him because there was no truth or beauty in life. They went on smiling in their ugliness, torturing the beautiful things and making them ugly like themselves. He would kill himself. He did not belong in this ugly cruel world.

White little May, white like a moon. Like snow and silence under the trees. Snow and silence and rest forever and ever. Forever and ever. Rest! Rest!

May let him touch her. For a moment she was happy in a bright blank eternal happiness that was an instant only. Then she was cold and alone and afraid of him: of his face so hot and close, the

queer look in his eyes, and of his hands that she could not stop.

"Oh, Paul," she kept saying, half sobbing. "Please, Paul! Don't. Oh, don't, don't! Please, Paul, don't!"

When he drew her down beside him and they rested together on the couch she felt the hot nap of the cloth cover, stiff against her cheek. It seemed to her that the afternoon light was terrible in the still room. Bobby had a new canary bird and Aunt Julia had hung the cage inside the window. The bird hopped from the perch to the cage floor, from the floor to the perch, and the thud of its descent was monotonously reiterated. Occasionally seeds fell in a series of ticks against the polished wainscot. Beyond Paul's head, May looked into the pane above the bird cage, and the glass was like a melted sun. On either side of the glowing transparent squares, the yellow curtains were slack. May fancied that Bobby was on the stairs and that she could hear old Nellie moving about in the kitchen below.

The heat in the room made May cold. Paul's hot face against her cheek burnt like ice. She was dead already, shriveled in the cold heat. She pushed at him feebly. She could scarcely hear her own

words that told him to stop. They were just a low buzzing from her cold dead lips. Paul was making her aware of herself, of her body that she did not know, that now she could never forget.

He was crying. It astonished her that he was crying, but she felt nothing except a cold burning sensation that came from the warmth of his tears slipping across her face. She was surprised that he cried so silently. Now he lay still against her with his face in her hair. His stillness was too deep. She could not bear it. Her body was cramped and stiff. She felt his heart beating against her like an echo of her own, and above it she heard the clicking of the traveling clock on Aunt Julia's desk, and the creaks of the woodwork on the stairway and in the hall.

If somebody came she would lie there forever. She was dead. She wanted to think she was dead.

But nobody came.

She shut her eyes again, and after what seemed a long time she knew that Paul was getting up and going away from her. She closed her eyes tighter so that she might not see him.

When he tip-toed across the room he made the floor shake. May's shut eyes with the sun on them were sightless flaming lead under her lids. She

turned a little and hid her face in a pillow, wondering where Paul was, waiting for him to go so that she could bear it. All at once she knew that he had come out of somewhere and was standing beside her in the light looking down.

He leaned over and whispered, "Get up, May! Somebody 'ull come in and find you lying there!"

His voice was frightened. She wondered why he was afraid. It made her sick with his fright. He added, "I love you."

When he said, "I love you," she was, without explaining it to herself, ashamed for him. She did not answer. She was conscious of his stealthiness. It oppressed her. She would not let him see her face. When the floor shook again she knew he was going out. She waited to hear his footsteps on the stairs and the slam of the front door. Then she pushed herself to her elbow and glanced about. In her new body she was strange with herself. She stood up and smoothed her rumpled dress quickly and guiltily. Then she ran out of the room and upstairs to her own garret.

When the door was locked she threw herself on the bed on her face. The darkness of the pillow was cool to her eyes and to her whole soul. She

wanted her throbbing body to lie still in the cool dark. She felt that she was ugly and terrible in her disgrace. She wanted to ask Paul to forgive her because she had behaved as she had. Sobbing into the bedclothes, she kept murmuring to herself, "I love him! I love him! Oh, I love him!"

TO defend his vanity, Paul thought of himself as outcast and desperate. He wanted to invite the sense of tragedy in himself. He felt numb and despoiled. In the intensity of his misery earlier in the day there had been, after all, a kind of promise. Now May had gone away from him as if she were dead. The thought of Aunt Julia gave him only dull repugnance. He hoped doggedly that no one had known about it when he was with May. Beyond that he could not care.

When he reached home he went up to his room and, though it was yet afternoon, he fell asleep soddenly without a dream. Before, his fatigue had been sharp and hungry. Now he was only tired of his own emptiness and stupidity.

At the dinner hour he was called downstairs. Blaming his aunt and uncle for his own fears, he entered the dining room with a hang-dog air. His

food was tasteless. There seemed nothing to think about until his uncle glanced at him. Guilt permeated Paul. He was hot and angry.

After the meal he went upstairs and hid himself in the dark. He wondered if any of the beautiful things he had dreamed about existed. Everywhere was inflated dullness. He dwelt on this until he astonished himself by finding a faint pleasure in his reflections. He decided that the stars he saw through the window were burning nettles, and that they pricked his glance when he looked at them. Suddenly there was something substantial and satisfying in his very self-contempt. He decided that he was no better than Julia, and that he detested her and himself for the same reason. It was peculiarly soothing to perceive his own courage in self-condemnation. In despising himself he unclothed himself and he was with her in spiritual nakedness, which somehow took on a fleshly image so that he dared not think of it too clearly.

LAURENCE forced himself to be alone with Julia. He went into her sitting room casually and took up a book, but when he was seated he did not read. His elbow rested on the arm of the chair

and he held his head to one side with his brow laid against his palm.

It was Sunday. Dry hot air blew into the room from the almost deserted street. Now and then the window curtains swelled slightly with the breeze. The canary's cage hung in the light near the ceiling. The sunshine slipped in wavering lines across the gilded bars. The bird tapped with its beak on the sides of the cage which oscillated with its quick motions. Sometimes it flew to its swing that moved with a jerk, and a shower of seeds rattled lightly against the sill below.

Julia had drawn a chair up to her desk and spread before her the materials for letter writing. The pen lay idle in her relaxed fingers. Laurence tried to be unaware that she was watching him. "Laurence."

He stirred a little. It was hard to look at her. "Yes?" His smile was cold and uneasy. He was not ready to talk with her about himself.

Julia rose and came toward him. He glanced away.

When she stood by him she placed her hand on his. He made an effort not to withdraw his fingers. When he lifted his face to her his expression was

kind and obscure. He seemed to draw a veil across himself.

"I can't bear it, Laurence!" She knelt down beside him. She wanted him to hurt her against his will. If she could rouse him against her she could endure it.

Laurence cleared his throat. He knew that he cringed when she touched his sleeve. He thought her voice sounded rich and strong with pain. Women were like that. "Can't bear what?" He realized that his subterfuge was absurd, but he smiled at her again.

She did not answer. Her eyes were steady with reproach. Her throat swelled with repressed sobs. "Why can't we be frank about things, Laurence? We can't go on like this always. I know I have no right here. I ought to go away! I know I ought. Somehow I haven't the courage."

He moved his arm away and stared out of the window. The smile went from his eyes. His gaze was vacant and fixed. "I don't ask you to go, Julia." His face twitched. His whole body showed his breaking resistance. Yet she knew that he would not relent.

"But you don't ask me to stay. It is painful to you to have me here, Laurence."

For a moment he compressed his lips without answering her. "I think you must decide everything for yourself. Your life is your own. You have told me that one of my mistakes in the past was in condescending to you and attempting to impose my own negative views upon you."

"But, Laurence, how can I decide a thing like this as if it were unrelated to you? If you would only talk to me! If you didn't consider everything that happens between us as if it were irrevocable!"

Laurence's expression softened. He turned his head so that she could not see his eyes. "I react slowly, Julia. I can't arrive at a set of difficult conclusions and then upset them in a moment." He sat stiffly, looking straight before him.

Julia got up and began to walk about, pressing the fingers of one hand about the knuckles of the other. "It's killing me!" she said. "It's killing me!"

Laurence suffered. He stood up like an old man. "In a few weeks the children are going off to school. Don't you think it would be better for their sakes if we waited until then to untangle our affairs?"

Julia came to him again. She saw that his eyes swam in a dull moist light. Self-reproach made her giddy. In condemning herself she was almost happy. She observed how, involuntarily, he drew away from her. "I won't touch you, Laurence." She was aware of the injustice and cruelty of what she said. No suffering but her own seemed of any consequence to her.

"You have no right to say that, Julia."

"I know it. Kiss me, Laurence. Say that you forgive me."

"How can I? What is there to forgive?" He kissed her. His lips were hard with repugnance. She welcomed the bitterness that was in his kiss. He said, "I have to think of myself, Julia."

She did not know how to reply. He went out of the room, not looking at her again.

She felt naked and outrageous. She wanted to fling away what she thought he did not treasure. When the pulse pounded in her wrists and temples she fancied that her horror could not burst free from itself.

Her sick mind found pleasure in destroying its own illusions. It seemed absurd that, having rejected so many gods, she had made a god of herself.

When her reflections became most bitter she grew calm and exalted. Her blood ran light. Having destroyed her world, her disbelief somehow survived as if on an eminence.

However, her emotions rejected their own finality. She felt that she had to go on somewhere outside herself.

MAY waited in vain for Paul to come back. She convinced herself that she was not good. When she believed in her own humility she was not afraid to admit that she wanted to see him. She was unhappy now with her own body. As soon as she saw her little breasts uncovered she felt frightened and ashamed and wanted to hide herself. When she was alone in her room she cried miserably, but as soon as her tears ceased to flow she lay on her bed in an empty waiting happiness, thinking of Paul. She recalled all that related to him since she had first known him. It gave her a beautiful happy sense of want to remember him so distinctly. However, when her thoughts arrived at the memory of the last thing that had occurred between them she imagined that she wished him to kill her so that she need no longer be ashamed.

I want to be dead! I want to be dead! She said this over and over into her pillow. Her beautiful pale braid of hair was in disorder. Her thin legs protruded from her wrinkled skirts. She lifted her small tear-smudged face with her eyes tight shut.

May wanted to tell Aunt Julia, but dared not. She knew Aunt Julia was sad, though she did not know why. Aunt Julia, however, resisted confidences. When she came in from work and found May waiting for her in the hall or on the stairs Aunt Julia made herself look tired and kind. "Well, May, dear, how are you? You seem to be a very bored young lady these days. Your father is thinking of sending you away to school when Bobby goes. How would you like that?" And she smiled in a perfunctory far-away fashion.

May saw that Aunt Julia was in another world and did not want her. "I don't care. Whatever you and Papa decide. I'm an awful ninny and should be terribly homesick."

"That would be good for you. You must learn to be self-reliant." Without glancing behind her, Aunt Julia passed quickly up the stairs and disappeared into her room. The door shut.

To May it was as if Aunt Julia knew everything

already and put her aside because of what she had done. She was dead and corroded with shame. Lonely, she wandered out into the back yard. The sky, in the late sunshine, was covered with a pale haze like faint blue dust. A shining wind blew May's hair about her face and swirled the long stems of uncut grass. The seeded tops were like brown-violet feathers. Beyond the roofs and fences the horizon towered, vast and cold looking.

May wanted it to be night so that she could hide herself. She knew Nellie was in the kitchen doorway watching her. She wanted to avoid the eyes of the old woman. Paul could not love her while she was despised.

White clothes on a line were stretched between the windows of the apartment houses that overhung the alley. The bleached garments, soaked with blue shadow, made a thick flapping sound as the wind jerked them about. When the sun sank the grass was an ache of green in the empty twilight. May thought it was like a painful dream coming out of the earth. She was afraid of the fixity of the white sky that stared at her like a madness. She knew herself small and ugly when she wanted to feel beau-

tiful. If she were only like Aunt Julia she would not be ashamed.

It grew dark. She loved the dark. There was a black glow through the branches of the elm tree against the fence. The large stars, unfolding like flowers, were warm and strange. In the enormous evening only a little shiver of self-awareness was left to her. She tried to imagine that, because she was ugly and impure, Paul had already killed her. The strangeness and exaltation she felt came to her because she was dead. She loved him for destroying her.

DUDLEY gave up the attempt to take Laurence into his life. Dudley had insisted on seeing the Farleys several times, but the result of these meetings was always disappointing. What he considered their small hard pride erected about them a wall of impenetrable reserves. He pitied them in their conventionality. They regard me, he thought, as a wrecker of homes, and the fact that I have been Julia's lover prevents them from recognizing me in any other guise.

He felt that he was learning a lesson. He must

avoid destructive intimacies. If he gave, even to small souls, he had to give everything. In order to save himself for his art he must learn to refuse. He was in terror of love, in terror of his own necessities, and afraid of meeting acquaintances who, with the brutality of casual minds, could shake his confidence in himself by uncomprehending statements regarding his work.

He grew morbid, shut himself up in his studio, and refused to admit any validity in the art of painters of his own generation. He persuaded himself that he was the successor of El Greco and that since El Greco no painter had done anything which could be considered of significance to the human race. He would not even admit that Cézanne (whom he had formerly admired) was a man of the first order. He was a painter, to be sure, but Dudley could ally himself only with those whose gifts were prophetic.

His imaginings about himself assumed such grandiose proportions that he scarcely dared to believe in them. To avoid any responsibility for his conception of himself he was persuaded that there was a taint of madness in him. Rather than awaken from a dream and find everything a delusion, he

would take his own life. He lay all day in his room and kept the blinds drawn, and was tortured with pessimistic thoughts, until, by the very blankness of his misery, he was able to overcome the critical conclusions of his intelligence. He did not eat enough and his health began to suffer. His absorption in death drew him to concrete visions of what would follow his suicide. He was unable to close his eyes without confronting the vision of his own putrid disintegrating flesh. In his body he found infinite pathos. As much as he wanted to escape his physical self, it was sickening to think of leaving it to the indignities of burial at the hands of its enemies.

The idea of suicide, haunting him persistently, aroused a resistant spirit in him. He exaggerated the envies of his contemporaries. He fancied that they feared him far more than they actually did and were longing for his annihilation. He decided that something occult which originated outside him was impelling him toward self-destruction. In refusing to kill himself he was combating evil suggestions rather than succumbing to his own repugnance to suffering and ugliness.

While he was in this frame of mind some one sent him a German paper that was the organ of an ob-

scure artistic group. In this journal, insignificantly printed, was a flattering reference to Dudley. He was called one of the leaders of a new movement in America. He read the article twice and was ashamed of the elation it afforded him. He could not admit his deep satisfaction in such a remote triumph. With a sense of release, he indulged to the full the vindictiveness of his emotions toward his own countrymen—those who were fond of dismissing him as merely one of the younger painters of misguided promise.

However, the praise from men as unrecognized as himself encouraged his defiance to such a point that he resumed work on a canvas which he had thrown aside. His own efforts intoxicated him. He refused to doubt himself. Life once more had the inevitability of sleep. He knew that he was living in a dream and only asked that he should not be disturbed.

He needed to run away from the suggestion of familiar things. He decided to go abroad again and wrote to borrow money of his father. Dudley made up his mind to avoid Paris where, as he expressed it, the professional artist was rampant. He wanted to visit the birthplace of a Huguenot ancestor who

had suffered martyrdom for his religion. It stimulated him to think of himself as the last of a line whose representatives had, from time to time, been crucified for their beliefs.

TWO endless streams of people moved, parti-colored, in opposite directions along the narrow street. The high stone buildings were tinged with the red of the low sunshine. Hundreds of windows, far up, catching the glare, twinkled with the harsh fixity of gorgon's eyes. Beyond everything floated the pale brilliant September sky overcast by the broad rays which stretched upward from the invisible sun.

Julia, returning from the laboratory, hesitated at a crowded corner and found Dudley beside her.

"This is pleasant, Julia. I've been wanting to see you and Laurence Farley. I'm sailing for Europe next week, and I should have been very much disappointed if I had been obliged to go off without meeting you again." He tried to speak easily while he looked at her with an expression of reproach. Julia smiled and held out her hand. There was a defensive light in her eyes which he interpreted as a symptom of dislike. He wanted to convince

himself that every one, even she, was completely alienated from him. All that fed his pain strengthened his vacillating egotism.

Julia noted the familiar details of his appearance: his short arms in the sleeves of a perfectly fitting coat; the plump hairy white hand which reached to hers a trifle unsteadily; his short well-made little body that he held absurdly erect; the wide felt hat that he tried to wear carelessly, which, in consequence, was slightly to one side on the back of his head and showed his dark curls; the childishly fresh color which glowed through the beard in his carefully shaven cheeks; his small full mouth that sulked in repose but when he smiled displayed exaggeratedly all of his little even teeth; his prettily modeled, womanish nose; the silky reddish mustache on his short lip; and his soft, ingratiating, long-lashed eyes. Everything in his appearance disarmed her resentment of him. Yet she knew that if she expressed anything of her state of mind he would take advantage of her vulnerability. She was prepared to see his gaze harden toward her and his demeanor, puerile now, become ruthless and commanding. She could not analyze the thing in herself that made her so helpless before him. She was able, she thought,

to observe him coldly. She withdrew her hand from his and said, "So you are going away again? I am glad for your sake. I know how America must irk you. Even from my viewpoint I can see that it is the last country for an artist." At the same moment her heart contracted and she told herself that there was something false and monstrous in Dudley which suppressed her natural impulse to be frank in stating what she felt for him.

Dudley walked beside her. She wants me to go away! He insisted on believing this. To know that she continued to suffer, however, comforted him as much now as it had in the past. He sensed that she had, in some remote way, remained subject to him. Because of this she was dear. When he remembered that, but for this accidental meeting, he would not have communicated his departure to her he was momentarily panic-stricken. He no longer wished to detach himself from her.

"Tell me about your work. What are you doing now?"

He took her arm. "I can't talk about my work, Julia. Something goes out of me that ought to go into the work when I talk about it too much. That's my struggle—my fight. It's terrifying at times. I

know all the hounds are baying at my heels. When I go abroad this time I am going to avoid Paris. I know dozens of cities. Paris is the only one which is a work of art. That's why I am going to keep away. I am through with the finality of that kind of art. I am going abroad to feel how much of an American I am. That's why I hate it so. It's in me—a part of me. I can't escape it. I must express it. That is my salvation—in belonging to America." It was almost irresistible to tell her some of the conclusions he had arrived at to comfort himself, but he knew that Julia never approached a subject from a cosmic angle. She made him feel small and unhappy and full of a homesickness for understanding. In her very crudity she was the life he had to face. "I want to talk to you about yourself, Julia. There are clouds of misunderstanding between us. We mustn't leave things like this." He pressed her arm against his side.

She was ashamed before a stout woman who was passing who showed, by the expression of dull attention in her eyes, that she had overheard his remark. In this atmosphere of public intimacy Julia felt grotesque. "I can't talk about myself, Dudley.

Don't ask me. You've put me out of your life. Why should you be interested?"

He was conscious of the stiffening of her body as she walked beside him and observed the forced immobility of her face. Emerging from the self-loathing which was an undercurrent to his vanity, he was grateful to her for allowing him to hurt her. He began to wonder if he were not, at this instant, realizing for the first time the significance of his relationship to her—not its significance in her life, but its significance in his own. He admitted to himself the cruelty of his feeling for her. He wanted to torture her, to annihilate her even. It pleased him to discover in himself enormous capacities for all things that, to the timid-minded, constitute sin. He must embrace life without moral limitations. "Julia, my dear—you must not misunderstand my feeling for you. I want you—want you even physically—as much as I ever did." His voice shook a little. "It is only because I understand now that I must refuse myself much. I have found just this last month a marvelous spiritual rest which makes living deeply more acceptable."

Julia had never felt more contemptuous of him.

"What I have to say would only convince you of my limitations."

"Don't be childish, Julia. You don't want to understand me. We can't talk in the street. Come to my studio for half an hour." He could not let her go away from him yet.

Julia's pride would not allow her to object.

On the way they passed an acquaintance of Dudley's. Dudley could not explain to himself why he was ashamed of being seen with Julia. He wanted to hurry her through the street.

In the oncoming twilight the brilliant shop fronts were vague with glitter and color. Above the glowering tower of an office building a blanched star twinkled among faded clouds. When they reached Dudley's doorstep Julia began to feel morally ill and to wonder why she had come. As Dudley watched her mount the long green-carpeted stairs before him he was suddenly afraid of her.

They entered the studio. It was almost dark in the big room. The canvas that Dudley was working on stood out conspicuously in the translucent gloom that filtered through the skylight. He crossed the floor and furtively threw an old dressing gown over the painting.

Julia found herself unable to speak. When she discerned the lounge she sat down weakly upon it.

Dudley stumbled over the furniture. He wanted to evade the moment when he must find the lamp. "Take off your wrap, Julia. I can't find matches. I seem to have mislaid everything. I am a graceless host." His own voice sounded strange to him.

When at last he struck a match, Julia said, "Don't!" and put her hands to her eyes. The flame, which, for an instant, had blindly illumined his face, went out. Dudley could not bring himself to move. The evening sky, dim with color, was visible through the windows behind him, and above the sombre roof of the factory that rose from the courtyard his figure was thrown into relief. Objects over which there seemed to brood a peculiar stillness loomed about the room.

The tension was intolerable to them both. They were experiencing the same nausea and disgust of their emotions—emotions which seemed inevitable for such a moment and so meaningless. Dudley said, "Where are you? I'm afraid of stumbling over you."

Julia, a hysterical note in her voice, answered,

"Here I am, Dudley." She knew that he was coming toward her. She wanted to die to escape the thing in herself which would yield to him. But at this instant the light flashed on and everything that she was feeling appeared to her as unjustifiable and ridiculous.

To Dudley, Julia's body represented all the darkness of self-distrust and the coldness of his own worldly mind. He wished that her personality were more bizarre so that he might regard his past acts as mad rather than commonplace. He did not know why he had brought her to the studio and was ashamed to look at her. There was nothing for it but to admit the duality of his nature, and that half of it was weak. He longed to hasten the time of sailing when he would begin completely his life alone in which nothing but the artist in him would be permitted to survive. He said, "Is it too late for me to make you some tea? Let me take your wrap." When he approached her he averted his gaze.

"I can't stay long, Dudley. It is better that I shouldn't." She wanted to force on him an admission of her defeat. If she could only reproach him by showing him the destruction of her self-respect! Her eyes were purposely open to him. He would

not see her. She resented his obliviousness. "You seem to me a master of evasion."

When he sat down near her, he said, "Let it suffice, Julia, that I take the hard things you want to say to me as coming from a human being whom I respect and care for enormously—and I still think everything fine possible between us provided you accept in me what I have never doubted in you—my absolute good faith, and my absolute desire, to the best of my powers, to be honest and sincere in every moment of our relationship, past and present."

Julia gave him a long look which he obliged himself to meet. Then she got up. "I can't stay, Dudley. You won't understand." She turned her head aside. Her voice trembled. "It's painful to me."

He rose also, helplessly. He wanted to wring a last response from her. It was impossible. Everything seemed dark. He would not forgive her for going away.

Julia took up her wrap from a chair and went out hastily without looking back.

Dudley felt a swift pang of despair. Not because she was gone, but because her going left him again with the problem of reviving the hallucinations of greatness. It was not easy for him to deceive him-

self. He could do so only in the throes of emotions which exhausted him. In moments of unusual detachment he perceived the faults in himself as apart from the real elements of genius that existed in his work. But he was not strong enough to continue his efforts for the sake of an imperfect loveliness. Only in spiritual drunkenness could he conquer his susceptibility to the nihilistic suggestions of complacent and unimaginative beings.

PART III

JULIA and Laurence were to dine with Mr. and Mrs. Hurst. Of late Laurence had shown an unusual measure of social punctiliousness. Julia realized that his new determination to see and be with people was a part of his resistance to suffering. She thought bitterly that his regard for the opinions of others was greater than his regard for her.

Julia put on a thin summer gown, very simply made, a light green sash, and a large black hat. Her misery had pride in itself, but when she looked in the glass she was pleased, and it was difficult to preserve the purity of her unhappiness. As she descended the stairs at Laurence's side she felt guiltily the trivial effect of her becoming dress. She wanted him to notice her. "I'm afraid we are late."

His fine eyes, with their sharp far-away expression, rested on her without seeming to take cognizance of her. "I hope not. Mrs. Hurst is a hostess who demands punctuality." He spoke to her as to a child. There was something cruel in his kindness.

For fear of exposing himself he refused her equality.

If he would only love her—that is to say, desire her—Julia knew that she would be willing to make herself even more abject than she had been, and that it would hurt her less than his considerate obliviousness. Laurence had ordered a taxi-cab. The driver waited at the curbstone in the twilight. He turned to open the door for the two as they came out. Julia was avidly, yet resentfully, aware of his surreptitious admiration. She told herself that her sex was so beggared that she accepted without pride its recognition by a strange menial.

It was a beautiful cool evening. The glass in the taxi-cab was down. The cold stale smell of the city, blowing in their faces, was mingled with the perfume of the fading flowers in the park through which they passed. The trees rose strangely from the long dim drives. Here and there lights, surrounded by trembling auras, burst from the foliage. Far off were tall illuminated buildings, and, about them, in the deep sky, the reflection was like a glowing silence. The wall of buildings had the appearance of retreating continually while the cab approached, as if the huge blank bulks of hotels and

apartment houses, withdrawing, held an escaping mystery.

Laurence scarcely spoke. Julia's sick nerves responded, with a feeling of expectation, to the vagueness of her surroundings. Her heart, beating terrifically in her breast, seemed to exist apart from her, unaffected by her depression and fatigue. It was too alive. She cried inwardly for mercy from it.

Mrs. Hurst's home was a narrow, semi-detached house with a brown-stone front and a bow window. From the upper floor it had a view of the park. When Julia and Laurence arrived, a limousine and Mr. Hurst's racer were already drawn up before the place. There were lights in one of the rooms at the right, and, between the heavy hangings that shrouded its windows, one had glimpses of figures.

Laurence said sneeringly, "Hurst has arrived, hasn't he! Affluent simplicity in a brown-stone front. You are honored that Mrs. Hurst is carrying you to glory with her."

Julia said, "But they really are quite helpless with their money, Laurence. Mrs. Hurst has a genuine instinct for something better."

"How ceremonious is this occasion anyway? I

don't know whether I am equal to the frame of mind that should accompany evening dress."

"There will only be one or two people. Mrs. Hurst knows how we dislike formal parties."

Mr. Hurst, waving the servant back, opened the front door himself. He was a tall, narrow-shouldered man with a thin florid face. His pale humorous blue eyes had a furtive expression of defense. His mouth was thin and weak. His manner suggested a mixture of braggadocio and self-distrust. He dressed very expensively and correctly, but there was that in his air which somehow deprecated the success of his appearance. His sandy hair, growing thin on top, was brushed carefully away from his high hollow temples. The hand he held out, with its carefully manicured nails, was stubby-fingered and shapeless. "Well, well, Farley! How goes it? I've been trying to get hold of you. Want to go for a little fishing trip?" He was confused because he had not spoken to Julia first. "How d'ye do, Mrs. Farley? Think you could spare him for a few days?" Mr. Hurst's greeting of Laurence was a combination of bluff familiarity and resentful respect. When he looked at Julia his eyes held hers in bullying admiration.

Julia had never been able to say just where his elusive intimacy verged on presumption. Feeling irritated and helpless and sweetly sorry for herself, she lowered her lids.

"My—dear!" Mrs. Hurst kissed Julia. "How sweet you look! How do you do, Mr. Farley? It was nice of you to let Julia persuade you to come to us. We really feel you are showing your confidence in us. Julia, dear girl, tells me you have as much of an aversion to parties as Charles and I have. This will be a homely evening. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson are here, and there is a young Hindoo who has been giving some charming talks at the Settlement House. He speaks very poor English but he's so interested in America. He's only become acquainted with a few American women. I want him to meet Julia. I think he'll amuse her too." Mrs. Hurst's short little person was draped in a black lace robe embroidered with jet. She squinted when she smiled. Minute creases appeared about her bright eyes. Her expression was gentle and deceitful. Her arms, protruding from her sleeve draperies, were thin, and their movements weak. Her wedding ring and one large diamond-encircled turquoise hung loosely on the third finger of her left

hand. Her hands were meager and showed that her bones were very small and delicate. About her hollow throat she wore a black velvet band, and her cheeks, no longer firm, were, nevertheless, childishly full above it. Though she said nothing that justified it, one felt in her a sort of affectionate malice toward those with whom she spoke. In her flattering acknowledgment of Julia's appearance there was something insidiously contemptuous. "Come away with me, child, and we'll dispose of that hat. Williams!" She turned to the Negro servant whom Mr. Hurst had intercepted at the door. She nodded toward Mr. Farley. The Negro went forward obsequiously.

"Yes, Williams, take Mr. Farley's hat," Mr. Hurst said. Then, in humorous confidence, *sotto voce*, "How about a drink, Farley? My wife has that young Hindoo here. This is likely to be a dry intellectual evening. That may suit you, but I have to resort to first aid. Want to talk to you about that fishing trip. Come on to my den with me."

Shortly after this, Julia, descending the stairs with her hostess, found Laurence and Mr. Hurst in the hall again. Laurence, his lips twisted disagreeably, was listening with polite but irritating quiescence to

Mr. Hurst's incessant high-pitched talk. Mr. Hurst, who had been surreptitiously glancing toward the shadowy staircase that hung above his guest's head, was quick to observe the approach of the women. He had always found fault with what he considered to be Julia's coldness, but he admired her tall figure and her fine shoulders. "Hello, hello! Here they are!"

"Charles!" Mrs. Hurst was whimsically disapproving. "Why haven't you taken Mr. Farley in to meet our guests? You are an erratic host."

Mr. Hurst moved forward. "That's all right! That's all right! Farley and I had some strategic confidences. You take him off and show him your Hindoo. I want Mrs. Farley to come out and see my rose garden, out in the court. I'm going to have a few minutes alone with her before you conduct her to the higher spheres and leave me struggling in my natural earthly environment. I won't be robbed of a little tête-à-tête with a pretty woman, just because there's an Oriental gentleman in the house who can tell her all about her astral body. Did you ever see your astral body, Mrs. Farley?"

"Boo!" Mrs. Hurst waved him off and pushed Julia toward him. "Go on, if she has patience with

you. But mind you only keep her there a moment. I've told Mr. Vakanda she was coming and I'm sure he's already uneasy. Rose garden, indeed! It's quite dark, Charles! Come, Mr. Farley. Put this scarf about you, dear." She took a scarf up and threw it around Julia's shoulders.

"Ta-ta!" Mr. Hurst came confidently to Julia, and they walked out together across a glass-enclosed veranda that was brilliantly lit. Descending a few steps they were among the roses. "Autumn roses," said Mr. Hurst. The bushes drooped in vague masses about them. Here and there a blossom made a pale spot among the obscure leaves. Where the glow from the veranda stretched along the paths, the grass showed like a blue mist over the earth, and clusters of foliage had a carven look. The dark wall of the next house, in which the lighted windows were like wounds, towered above them. Over it hung the black sky covered with an infinite flashing dust of stars. Julia's face was in shadow, but her hair glistened on the white nape of her neck where the black lace scarf had fallen away.

Mr. Hurst had made a large sum of money from small beginnings. He would have enjoyed in peace the sense of power it gave him, and the indulgence

in fine wines and foods and expensive surroundings for which he lived, but his wife prevented it. He had married her when they were both young and impecunious. She had been a school teacher in a mid-western city. She had managed to convince him that in marrying him she conferred an honor upon him, and she succeeded now in making him feel out of place and absurd in the environment which his efforts had created, which she, however, turned to her own use. Instead of flaunting his success in boastful generosity, according to his inclination, he found himself compelled to deprecate it. He had a secret conviction that he was a man to be reckoned with, but openly, and especially before his wife's friends, he ridiculed himself, perpetrating laborious and repetitious jokes at his own expense, just as she ridiculed him when they were alone.

Mrs. Hurst was chiefly interested in what she considered culture, and in welfare work, and among her acquaintances referred to her husband affectionately as if he were a child. She had no connection which would give her the *entrée* to socially exclusive circles, and she was wise enough not to attempt pretenses which it would have been impossible for her to sustain. Her husband's friends were mostly self-

made and newly rich. She was affable to them but maintained toward them a mild but superior reserve. She expressed tolerantly her contempt of social ostentation and suggested that among Mr. Hurst's play-fellows she was condescending from her more vital and intellectual pursuits. Men who drank and played golf or poker between the hours of business considered her "brainy," but "a damned nice woman". She was generous to impecunious celebrities of whom she had been told to expect success. On one occasion when she and Mr. Hurst were sailing for England she was photographed on shipboard in the company of a popular novelist. The picture of the novelist, showing Mrs. Hurst beside him in expensive furs, appeared in a woman's magazine. She had never seen the man since, but she always referred to him as "a charming person". She was frequently called upon to conduct "drives" for charity funds. At masquerade balls organized for similar purposes her name appeared with others better known and she could honestly claim acquaintance with women whose frivolous occupations she professed to despise. She was an assiduous attendant at concerts and the public lectures which were given from time to time by men of letters or exponents of

the arts. References to sex annoyed her. The vagueness of her aspirations sometimes led her into fits of depression and discouragement, but she had a small crabbed pride that prevented her from allowing any one—least of all, perhaps, her husband—to see what she felt. She was conscientiously attentive to children, but actually bored by them. She seldom thought of her own childhood, and she sentimentalized her past only when she reflected on her early girlhood and the instinctive longing for withheld refinements which had led her away from a sordid uncultured home into the profession of a teacher. Often her husband irritated her almost uncontrollably, but she never admitted that the moods he aroused in her had any significance. She was ashamed of him and called the feeling by other names.

Mr. Hurst's frustrated vanity consoled itself somewhat when he was alone before his mirror, for even his wife admitted that he was distinguished looking. He consumed bottle after bottle of a prescription which, so a specialist assured him, would make his hair come back. Always gay and affectionate and generally liked, he had a secret sensitiveness that he himself was but half aware of, and

which no one who knew him suspected. He had never abandoned the romantic hope that some day he would meet a woman who would understand him. It was his unacknowledged desire to have his wife's opinion of him repudiated that made him perpetually unfaithful to her. Years ago he had been astonished to discover that even the women whom his wife introduced him to, who looked down on his absence of culture, and whose intellectual earnestness really seemed to him grotesque, were quite willing to take him seriously when he made love to them. He was bewildered but elated in perceiving the vulnerability of those he was invited to revere. Once he learned this it awakened something subtle and feminine in his nature and tempted him to unpremeditated cruelties. Though his sex entanglements were, as a rule, gross and banal enough, and quickly succeeded one another, he treasured at intervals a plaintive conviction that some day he would meet the woman who had, as he expressed it, "the guts to love him". Musing on this, he found in it the excuse for all the unpleasing episodes in which he took part. Outwardly cynical, he was sentimental to the point of bathos. He had one fear that obsessed him, the fear

of growing old, so that *the* woman, when she met him, might not be able to recognize him.

He had always been a little afraid of Julia and had a secret desire, on the rare occasions when they met, to hurt her in some way that might force her to concede their equality. He called himself a mixture of pig and child and when he met any of his wife's "high-brow" friends he envied them and wanted to trick them into exhibiting something of the pig also. Julia was young and pretty. He sighed and wished her more "human". He had never found her so charming as she seemed to-night. Under the accustomed stimulus of alcohol he relaxed most easily into a mood of affectionate self-pity. Without being drunk in any perceptible way, he loved himself and he loved every one, and his conviction of human pathos was strong. Julia's tense yet curiously subdued manner showed him that she was no longer oblivious to him. He fancied that there was already between them that sudden *rapport* which came between him and women who were sexually sensible of his personality. "You aren't angry with me for taking you away like this?"

Julia said, "How could I be? I wish all social

gatherings were in the open. It seems terrible to shut one's self indoors on these beautiful nights."

Charles Hurst was impelled to talk about himself. He did not know how to begin, and coughed embarrassedly. He imagined that Julia was ready to hear, and already he was grateful for the regard he anticipated. "Don't mind if I light a cigar?"

"I should like it."

"Don't smoke cigarettes, do you? Some of the ladies who come here shedding sweetness and light are hard smokers."

Julia shook her head negatively. "I don't. But you surely can't object, as a principle, to women smoking?"

"No. I think my objections are chiefly—chiefly what my wife—what Catherine would call esthetic. I'm not strong on principles of any sort. Don't take myself seriously enough."

Julia could make out his nonchalant angular pose as he stood looking down at her. As he held a match to his cigar the glow on his face showed his narrow regular features, his humorously ridiculing mouth, and his pale eyes caught in an unconscious expression of fright.

Julia said, "I'm afraid you take yourself very

seriously indeed, or you wouldn't be so perpetually on the defensive." Poor Mr. Hurst! This evening she could not bear to be isolated by conventional reserves, even with him. It flattered her unhappiness to feel that he was a child. And this evening it seemed to her desperately necessary that she touch something living which would respond involuntarily to the contact.

Mr. Hurst was disconcerted. He took the cigar out of his mouth and examined the glowing tip which dilated in the dark as he stared at it. Tears had all at once come to his eyes. He wondered if he were drunker than he had imagined. The moment he suspected any one of a serious interest in him it robbed him of his aplomb. "Don't read me too well, Mrs. Farley. You know I'm not really much of a person. Coarse-fibered American type. No interests beyond business and all that. Good poker player. Hell of a good friend—when you let him. But commonplace. Damn commonplace. Nothing worth while at all from your point of view."

They strolled along the path further into the shadows. Julia was astonished by the ill-concealed emotion in Mr. Hurst's humorous voice. His transparency momentarily assuaged the tortures of her

self-distrust. "How can you say that? My human predilections are not narrowed down to any particular type, I hope."

"Oh, well, I know—you and Catherine—miles over my head, all of it. Lectures on the Fourth Dimension. Some girl with adenoids here the other night been studying 'Einstein'. Damned if it had done her any good. Yes, what that gal needed was somebody to hug her." Julia was conscious that he was turning toward her. "Crass outlook, eh?" He laughed apologetically.

"She probably did," Julia said. They laughed together.

Mr. Hurst felt all at once unreasoningly depressed. He wanted to touch her as a child wants to touch the person who pleases it. But the sophisticated element in his nature intervened. He despised his own simplicity. "Do you find yourself getting anywhere in the pursuit of the good, the true, and the beautiful? Honestly now, Mrs. Farley. I've had the whole program shoved at me—not that Catherine isn't the best of women, bless her little soul. You know the life we tired business men lead pretty much resembles that of the good old steady pack horse that does the work. We dream about green pastures

and all that, but never get much closer to it. And when you get to the end of things you begin to wonder if your plodding did anybody any good—if anything ever did anybody any good. I've got no use for cynicism—consider it damn cheap. Wish some time I was a little bit more of a cynic. But I'm lost. Hopelessly lost. I take a highball every now and then because my—I think my mind hurts." He halted suddenly and they were looking into each other's vague faces. "This talk getting too damn serious, eh? Something about you to-night that invites a fellow to make a fool of himself."

"I hope not," Julia said. "I like you for talking frankly."

"Oh, I'm not too damn frank. We can't afford it in this world of hard knocks. Now to you, now, I'm not saying all that I'd like to, by a jugful."

"Then you don't make as much of a distinction between me and the crowd as I hoped."

Charles had let his cigar go out. He kept turning it over and over in his stiff fingers that she could not see. He felt that only when he held a woman in his arms and she was robbed of her conventional defenses could he speak openly to her. With other attractive women he had come quickly to a point

like this where he wanted to talk of his inner life. He imagined it would give him relief if he could touch Julia's dress and put his head in her lap. The terrible fear of revealing himself before his wife and her friends had stimulated his imagination toward abandon. When he was a child his mother had not loved him. She was a defiant person. She was ashamed of him because he allowed himself to be victimized by all the things against which she had futilely rebelled. He had felt himself despised though he had never understood the reason. His mother found continual fault with him and never petted him. One day a girl cousin much older than he had discovered him in a corner crying and had comforted him, and had allowed him to put his head in her lap. As he had never gotten over considering himself from a child's standpoint, his adult visions always culminated in a similar moment of release. Whenever he became sentimental about a woman he imagined that he would some day put his head in her lap. He had been, in his own mind, so thoroughly convicted of weakness that the development of strength no longer appealed to him as a means of self-fulfilment. He abandoned himself to an incurable dependence for which he had not as yet found

a permanent object. It eased him when he could evoke the maternal in a mistress. "Aren't we all— somewhat on the defensive toward each other?" he said after a minute.

Julia was reminded again of what she thought to be her own tragedy. She felt reckless and wanted some one into whom to pour herself. She imagined herself lost in the dark garden, crushed between the walls and bright windows of the houses. In some indefinable way she identified herself with the million stars, flashing and remote in the black distance of the sky that showed narrowly above the roofs. "Yes," she said. "And so uselessly. People are so pathetic in their determination not to recognize what they are. If we ever had the courage to stop defending ourselves for a moment— But none of us have, I'm afraid." She carried the pity which she had for herself over to him. She had noticed how thin his face was, that the bold gaze with which he looked at her was only an expression of concealment, and that there were strained lines at the corners of his good-tempered mouth. Yes, in the depths of his pale eyes with their conscious glint of humor there was undoubtedly something eager and almost blankly disconcerted.

Charles could not answer her at once. He threw his cigar aside. His hand trembled a little. I wonder how drunk I am, he said to himself. He decided that he was helpless in the clutch of his own impulses. He thought, A damn fool now as always. Have I got this woman sized up wrong? She's a dear. Here goes. Poor little thing! Gosh, I know she can't be happy with that self-engrossed ass she's married to! In his more secret nature he was proud of his own temerity. "Damn it all, Mrs. Farley—Julia—" He hesitated. "I've queered myself right off by calling you Julia, haven't I?" His laugh was forced and unhappy. He glanced over his shoulder toward the house.

Julia was alarmed by the unexpected immanence of something she was trying to ignore. She kept repeating to herself, He's a child! Her thoughts grew more disconnected each instant. She wanted to go away, yet she half knew that she was demanding of Charles the very thing that terrified her. "Of course not. Mrs. Hurst calls me Julia, why shouldn't you?" Her tone was intended to lift their talk to a plane of unsexed naturalness.

"Yes, by George, why shouldn't I! She calls you that a good deal as if she were your mother." He

paused. "Did you know I'd reached the ripe old age of forty-one?" (He was really forty-two.)

"It doesn't shock me."

"Well, I wish it did. I don't like to be taken so damn much for granted." (He wanted to tell her that Catherine was three years older than he, but his sense of fair play withheld him.) "An old man of my age has no right to go around looking for some one to understand him, has he?"

"Why not? I'm afraid we do that to the end of time, Mr. Hurst."

"Say, now, honestly, Mrs. Farley—Julia—I can't lay myself wide open to anybody who insists on calling me Mr. Hurst. I feel as if I were a hundred and seven." He tried to ingratiate himself with his boyishness.

"I haven't any objection to calling you Charles." (Julia thought uncomfortably of Mrs. Hurst and, remembering her, was embarrassed.) "Don't feel hurt if I'm not able to do it at once. Certain habits of thought are very hard to get rid of."

"And I suppose you've been in the habit of considering me in the sexless antediluvian class!"

"You've forgotten that Laurence—that my husband is as old as you are."

When Julia mentioned her husband, Charles's impetuosity was dampened. It upset him and made him unhappy. However, he was determined to sustain his impulses. "Yes, I had."

Silence.

Charles wanted to cry. "You know I appreciate it awfully that you are willing to enter into the holy state of friendship with an obvious creature like myself. Catherine says you're a wonderful woman, and she's a damned good judge—of her own kind, that is."

"I'm afraid she's flattered me. I wish you weren't so humble about our friendship. I am as grateful as you are for anything genuine."

"Yes, I'm too confounded humble. I know I am. Always was. You know I'm not really lacking in self-respect, Miss Julia."

"Of course you aren't. You seem to me one of the most self-respecting people I know."

Charles was silent a long time. He knew that he was being carried away on a familiar current. By God, she means it! he said to himself. He would refuse to regard anything but the present moment. "How does it happen you and I never came together like this before? I'd got into the habit of thinking

you were one of these icy Dianas that had an almighty contempt for any one as well rooted in Mother Earth as I am."

Julia laughed uncomfortably. "That's a mixed metaphor." Then she said seriously, "I want to understand things—not to try to escape. It seems to me we must all go back to Mother Earth if we try to do that." She added, "I'm afraid we are making ourselves delinquent. We mustn't abandon Mrs. Hurst and her guests altogether."

They turned toward the veranda. They were walking side by side and inadvertently Charles's hand brushed Julia's. He caught her fingers. She made a slight gesture of repulsion which he scarcely observed. Then her hand was relinquished to him. "Confound these social amenities! I thought you were going to be my mother-confessor, Miss Julia." Until he touched her hand he had been conscious of their human separateness and his sensuous impulses had been in abeyance. With the feel of her flesh, she became simply the woman he wanted to kiss, the possessor of a beautiful throat, and of mysterious breasts that compelled him familiarly through the dim folds of her white dress. His acquisitive emotion was savage and childlike. Here

was a strange thing which menaced and invited him. He wanted to know it, to tear it apart so that he need no longer be afraid of it. Already he annihilated it and loved it for being subject to him. He leaned toward her and when she lifted her face to him he kissed her. He felt the shudder of surprise that passed over her. "Julia—don't hate me. Child, I'm going to fall in love with you! I know it!" His voice was smothered in her hair. He kissed her eyes and her mouth again. Trembling, Julia was silent. He wondered recklessly if she despised him, but while he wondered he could not leave her. He felt embittered toward her because she awakened his dormant sensuality and he supposed that women like her were superior to the necessities that left him helpless.

"Please!" Julia said. When his mouth was pressed against hers she was suffocated by the same thrill of astonishment and despair which she had experienced when she first allowed Dudley Allen to take her. When she was able to speak she said, "Oh, we are so pathetic and absurd—both of us! It's so hopelessly meaningless."

He was excited and elated. In a broken voice, he said, "So you think I am pathetic and absurd? I

am, child. I don't care! I don't care!" He thought that she was referring to the general opinion of him. He hardened toward her, while, at the same moment, a wave of physical tenderness enveloped him. Stealthily, he exulted in the capacity he possessed for sexual ruthlessness. He knew she could not suspect it. He would be honest with her only when it became impossible for her to evade him.

They heard footsteps and turned from each other with a common instinct of defense. Mrs. Hurst was descending the steps from the lighted porch. "I have a bone to pick with that spouse of mine," she called pleasantly when she could see them. Charles had taken out a fresh cigar and was lighting a match.

"Hello, hello! Am I in trouble again?" Charles fumbled for Julia's hand, and gave it a squeeze, but dropped it as his wife drew near.

Mrs. Hurst's figure was in silhouette before them. "You'll spoil my dinner party, Charles! Julia, child, I'm afraid you need reprimanding too. You have to be stern with Charles." Her tone was truly vexed, but so frankly so that it was evident she suspected nothing amiss.

"I'm sorry if I am in disfavor." Julia's voice was cold. In her nihilistic frame of mind she wished

that her hostess had discovered the compromising situation.

Julia's reply was irritating and Mrs. Hurst's displeasure inwardly deepened. She felt stirring in her a chronic distrust and animosity toward other women, but would give no credence to her own emotion. "Come, child, don't be ridiculous! I suppose I can't blame Charles for trying to steal you from me. I'm sure he wanted to talk to you about himself. It's the one thing he cannot resist." She laughed, a forced pleasant little laugh, and caught Julia's arm in a determined caressing pressure. "Come. We're all going to be good. Mr. Vakanda is waiting to take you in to dinner." Julia followed her toward the house. "Come, Charles!" Mrs. Hurst commanded him abruptly over her shoulder. The manner in which she spoke to him suggested strained tolerance.

Charles's immediate relief at not having been seen was succeeded by complacency. To deceive his wife was for him to experience a naïve sense of triumph. Poor little Kate! He could even be sorry for her.

Julia more than ever wanted to feel that Laurence's refusal of her was forcing upon her a promiscuous and degrading attitude toward sex. She

said, "I'm sure the fault is mine. I couldn't resist the night and the roses."

"Now don't try to defend him. The roses were his excuse, not yours." Mrs. Hurst wondered how they had been able to see anything of the roses in such a light. She wished to forget about it. "Mollie Wilson has been telling us how difficult the rôle of a mother is these days. She says she envies you May with her amenability. Lucy has some of the most startlingly advanced conceptions of what her mother should let her do."

Charles, walking almost on their heels, interrupted them. "It would be an insult to Ju—to Mrs. Farley if I needed an excuse for carrying her off for a minute." He cleared his throat. "Say, Kate, damn it all, will you and she be upset if I call her Julia? I like her as well as you do."

Again Mrs. Hurst was irritated and inexplicably disturbed. It was Charles—not Julia—of course. Any woman. He's always like that! "Then I shall expect to begin calling Mr. Farley Laurence," she said acidly. She spoke confidentially to Julia. "He can't resist them, dear—any of them. Pretty women. You'll have to put up with his admiration. All my nicest friends do."

"The dickens they do!" Charles grumbled jocosely. His wife's tone made him nervous. He was suspicious of her.

When they came up on the lighted veranda a maid passed them, a neat good-looking young woman in black with inquisitive eyes. Julia caught on the servant's face what seemed an expression of inquiry and amusement. Charles, who had often tried to flirt with the girl, glanced at her shamefacedly and immediately lowered his gaze. Damn these women! Julia, feeling guilty and antagonistic, observed Mrs. Hurst, but found that she appeared as usual, sweet and negatively self-contained, yet suggesting faintly a hidden malice.

They walked through a long over-furnished hall and entered the drawing room. The men rose: the Hindoo, good-looking but with a softness that would inevitably repel the Anglo-Saxon; Mr. Wilson, stout and jovial, his small eyes twinkling between creases of flesh, the bosom of his shirt bulging over his low-cut vest; Laurence, clumsy in gesture, kind, but almost insulting in his composure.

During the evening Julia could not bring herself to meet Laurence's regard, nor did she again look directly at Mr. Hurst. Charles, after some initial

moments of readjustment when he found it difficult to join in the general talk, recovered himself with peculiar ease. Indeed his later manner showed such pronounced elation that Julia wondered if it were not eliciting some unspoken comment. When he turned toward her she was aware of the furtive daring of his expression, though she refused to make any acknowledgment of it. He laughed a great deal, made boisterous jokes uttered in the falsetto voice he affected when he was inclined to comicality, and, when his jests were turned upon himself, chuckled immoderately in appreciation of his own discomfiture. The Hindoo, whose bearing displayed extraordinary breeding, had opaque eyes full of distrust. His good nature under Charles's jibes was assumed with obvious effort and did not conceal his polite contempt. During dinner and afterward Charles plied every one, and particularly the men, with drink. Mrs. Hurst had always been divided between the attractions of the elegance which demanded a fine taste in wines and liqueurs, and her moral aversion to alcohol. She never served wines when she and Charles were alone, and to-night she was provoked by his ill-bred insistence that the glasses of her guests be refilled.

When the meal was over and the men had returned to the drawing room, Charles seemed to be in a state of fidgets. His face and even his helpless-looking hands were flushed. He walked about continually, and was perpetually smoothing his carefully combed hair over the baldish spot on the top of his head. Mrs. Wilson, who was florid and coarsely good-looking, with her iron-gray hair, admired his distinguished figure in its well-cut clothes. His flattering manner when he talked to her made her feel self-satisfied. Julia, though she had honestly protested to Charles that she did not smoke, indulged in a cigarette. Mrs. Wilson also lit one and expelled the smoke from her pursed mouth in jerky unaccustomed puffs. Mrs. Hurst's dislike of tobacco was equal to her repugnance to alcohol. She refused to smoke but was careful to show that her distaste for cigarettes was a personal idiosyncrasy. She made little amused grimaces at the smokers and treated them as if they were irresponsible children. Mrs. Wilson, in talking to Mr. Vakanda, contrived many casual and contemptuous references to her recent experiences in Europe. She was divided between her genuine boredom with European culture and her pride in her acquaintance with it.

Charles, observing Julia in this group, appreciated the distinction of her simpler, more aristocratic manner; and the clarity and frankness of her statements seemed to him to place her as a being from another world. Damn me, she's a thoroughbred! Makes me ashamed of myself, bless her soul! His emotions were too much for him. He went into his "den," which was across the hall, and poured himself a drink. Fragments of the evening's conversation buzzed in his head. Julia and Mr. Wilson had disagreed as to the validity of certain phases of the newer movements in art. Mr. Wilson scoffed blatantly at all of them. Mr. Vakanda was more reserved, but one suspected that he looked upon Westerners as adolescent and treated their art accordingly. Charles, without knowing what he was talking about, had come jestingly to Julia's rescue. When he remembered how often he had joined Mr. Wilson in ribald comment on subjects which she treated as serious, he felt he had been a traitor to her. Damn my soul, I'm hard hit! I never half appreciated that girl until to-night! Don't know what the hell's been the matter with me! Overcome by his reflections, he walked to a window and stared out into the quiet dimly lit street. His suddenly

aroused sensual longing for Julia returned and made him embarrassed and unhappy. He set his glass down on the window ledge and passed a hand across each eye as if he were wiping something away. Damn it all, I'm in love with her all right.

WHEN the time for the Farleys' departure arrived Charles was talkative and uneasy. He clapped his hand on Laurence's shoulder. "You're one of the few men who's fit to fish with, Farley. Most of 'em are too damned loud for the fish. We'll fix that little trip up yet. I suspect you of being the philosopher of this bunch anyway."

"I can furnish the requisite of silence, but I'm afraid it requires some peculiar psychic influence to attract fish. I haven't got it."

Charles's manner was self-conscious to a degree. He spoke rapidly and unnecessarily lifted his voice. His wife watched him with a cold kind little smile of disgust. She wanted to create the impression that she understood him, but her resentment of him rose chiefly from the fact that he was incomprehensible to her. "That's all right. I'll catch the fish. I'll catch the fish. Damned if I haven't enjoyed the evening. Say, Farley, Kate and I are coming over

some evening and I'm going to talk to your wife. I believe she's just plain folks even if she can chant Schopenhauer and the rest of those cranks. You know I admire your brains, Miss Julia. By Jove, I do. You can give me some of the line of patter I've missed. Kate, now—Kate's got it all at her finger tips, but she's given me up long ago. Have a drink before you go, Farley? No! You know I'm a great admirer of Omar Khayyám's, Miss Julia. The rest of you high-brows seem to have put the kibosh on the old boy. He's the fellow that had some bowels of compassion in him. Knew what it was like to want a drink and be dry." Charles smoothed back his hair. His hand was trembling slightly. He looked at Julia now and then but allowed no one else to catch his eyes.

Laurence, holding his silk hat stiffly in his fingers, moved determinedly toward the front door. His smile was enigmatic but his desire for escape was evident.

Julia said, "I'll talk to you about Schopenhauer, Mr. Hurst, and convince you that he was very far from a crank." She smiled.

"Yep? Well, guess I'm jealous of him. I'm willing to be taught. This business grind I'm in is con-

verting me into pretty poor company. Not much use for a meditative mind in the stock market. Eh, Farley? The women have got it all over us when it comes to refining life."

Laurence said, "I imagine I know as little of the stock market as my wife, Hurst."

"And you must remember I'm a business woman, too."

"So you are. Working in that confounded laboratory. Well, I've got no excuse then."

"Know thyself, Charles!" Mrs. Hurst shook her finger playfully.

"Yep. Constitutional aversion to knowing myself—knowing anything else. Looks to me as if you had picked a lemon, Kate."

"We must really go." Julia held out her hand.

Mrs. Hurst shook hands with Julia. "So delightful to have had you. I'm glad you impressed Mr. Vakanda with the significance of America in the world of art, dear." Mrs. Hurst, at that instant, disliked her guest intensely, but she preserved her smile and her delicate tactful air. Laurence shook hands with her also. His reserve appealed to her. She could be more frankly gracious with him.

Charles pressed Julia's fingers lingeringly, in spite of her efforts to withdraw them. He was suddenly depressed and gazed at her with an open almost despairingly interrogative expression. "Yep, damn me, Kate's right. You put the Far East in its place, Miss Julia. Did me good to see it." He giggled nervously, but his face immediately grew serious. Seeing her go away into her own strange world depleted the confidence he experienced while with her. He was oppressed by the company of his wife, and his pathetic feeling about himself returned. For the moment the hope that Julia would understand him—like him and exculpate his deficiencies, even see in him that which was admirable—was more poignant than the passing desire to touch and dominate her body. There was a helpless unreserve in his eyes.

Julia could see the tired lines in his face all at once peculiarly emphasized. His lips quivered. She thought he looked old but for some reason all the more childlike. She could not resist his need for her.

It was with an acute sense of disgust that Laurence left the house.

MR. HURST did not communicate with Laurence in regard to the fishing trip, but one morning soon after the dinner party Mrs. Hurst called Julia on the telephone and invited her to come with Laurence to an all-day picnic in the country. "This is just the sort of thing Charles delights in," Mrs. Hurst explained, in her hard pleasant light-timbred voice. Julia heard her polite laugh over the wire. "I shan't blame you if you refuse us. It's really too absurd. We shall probably be consumed by mosquitoes."

"Why, I'm afraid we can't go," Julia said. "Laurence is very busy and you know I have my work, too."

"I suppose you can't get off for a day—either of you? Charles is quite determined to see you and your husband again."

"It wouldn't be possible. It's nice of you. I really would enjoy it but it wouldn't be possible for either of us."

Again Mrs. Hurst's confidential amusement. "Well, I'm sorry. Though for your own sake I'm glad. Charles has rather a boy's idea of fun. Well —don't be surprised if we arrive at your front door some evening in the near future."

"I shall be very glad," Julia said.

On a Monday evening while the Farley family were at an early dinner they heard a laboring motor in the street. Bobby, who could not be restrained when the prospect of diversion was at hand, ran out to see what it was and, on his return, reported that Mr. and Mrs. Hurst were at the front door.

Laurence laid his napkin wearily aside. "To what do we owe the honor? Have you been to see them since the other night?"

Julia said she had not.

When Julia arrived in the hallway Mr. and Mrs. Hurst were already there, having been admitted by Bobby. Julia could not look at Charles's face. With an effort she smiled at his wife.

Mrs. Hurst, with one of her pleasant, mildly reducing grimaces, said, "How are you? You were dining? There! I told you so, Charles!"

Julia imagined that there was constraint in Mrs. Hurst's manner. Their hands barely touched.

"How do you do? How do you do, Mrs. Hurst?" Laurence's expression was polite but not agreeable. For some reason he spoke to Charles with more cordiality.

"How d'ye do, Farley? How d'ye do, Miss Julia!

Bless my soul, I'm glad to see you! Kate couldn't keep me away from here. Yes, I confess it. All my fault." He was uneasy as before, and adopted the falsetto tone of his comic moods. He wrung Julia's hand for an instant and looked greedily into her face. But he could not sustain the gaze. He turned to Laurence and began to joke about the speed of his motor car.

"Please go on to your dinner. I'm really ashamed that I allowed Charles to bring me here now." Mrs. Hurst, smiling, preserved the inconsequential atmosphere of the group. At the same time she felt a repugnance to Julia which she had never experienced until recently.

Julia, also, disliked the furtive intentness with which Mrs. Hurst, continuing to smile, occasionally scrutinized her.

"We dine so much later."

"But we've quite finished—unless you will have a cup of coffee with us?"

"Coffee? What say, coffee?" Charles could not keep from listening to what Julia and his wife were saying, though he was trying, at the same time, to talk to Laurence. Now he interrupted himself. "Shall we have some coffee with them, Kate?" Just

then he caught Julia's eyes and a flush spread over his face. "I think we'd better forego the coffee and take these people for a little ride. That's what we came for." He kept on gazing steadily and sentimentally at Julia who was embarrassed by this too open regard.

"Shall we? Perhaps we had. Our own dinner hour will come all too soon," Mrs. Hurst said.

"Won't you come in here?" Laurence motioned toward an open door.

Julia was vexed by her own mingled depression and agitation. Frowning and smiling at the same time, she added abstractedly, "Yes. How ridiculous we are—standing here in this chilly hall. Please come in here. I will have Nellie make a fire for you."

"Who wants a fire this time of year!" Charles followed his wife, who entered the half-darkened room with Julia. "Farley, you and Miss Julia get your wraps and we'll wait for you. Don't waste your time making yourself lovely, Miss Julia."

After Laurence had turned up the lights he and Julia went out. Charles and his wife, who had seated themselves, waited in silence. Charles stretched out his long legs in checked trousers and

crossed them over one another. He stared up at the ceiling and pursed his mouth in a soundless whistle.

Catherine said, "We can't stay with these people long. You know the Goodes are coming over after dinner."

Charles started. "What's that?" He sat bolt upright. "Goodes, eh? No. All right. Plenty of time." He did not relax his posture again, but drummed on the arm of his chair, tapped his feet, and for a few moments half hid his face in the cupped palm of his hand.

Mrs. Hurst looked bored and tired. Her small sardonic mouth was very precisely set. Her gaze was both humorous and weary. Now and then she glanced at Charles and forced a twinkle to her eyes, while, at the same moment, her features showed her repressed irritation. Mrs. Hurst had suspected, after the previous meeting with the Farleys, that Charles was interested in Julia. Suspicion sharpened her observation of him but her policy toward him demanded of her that she be amused by all he did. Otherwise the situation between them might long ago have precipitated a crisis which she, at least, was not ready to face. In a moment of im-

petuosity Charles would be capable of heaven-knows-what regrettable and irretrievable resolution. He had so often shown the same kind of frank admiration for a pretty woman that she made the best of things by appearing to tolerate, if not to encourage, his folly. She was certain that his infatuations were so illusory that a little enforced acquaintance with the intimate personalities of her successive rivals would dissipate his regard for them. In this case, too, she had no fear that a woman of Julia's poise and enlightenment would make any serious response to Charles's naïve overtures. If Mrs. Hurst could convince herself that a situation was sufficiently grotesque (viewed, of course, from the standpoint of manners) it became unreal to her, and she could no longer believe that such a vague and ridiculous cause would produce any effect in actuality.

Waiting for Laurence and Julia to appear, Charles, even when he was not looking at her, was conscious of his wife's personality. Though he could not analyze the impression, he was, as he had been repeatedly before, disconcerted by the cold understanding which he saw in her small, humorously lined face. He was startled by the boldness of her evasions. All his mental attempts to capture a

grievance were diverted when he considered her demure gentleness and good breeding. He had, at the outset, to accept the fact of his inferiority. Now his pale eyes, fixed intermittently in an upward gaze, were startled and perturbed. His mouth twitched. He felt boisterous, and suppressed his laughter, though he did not know whether he should direct it against her or against himself. She was so visually real to him: her withered small hands, the flesh under her plump throat—flesh that fell away and somehow failed to soften the contour of her little chin. At these moments when she connived, or so it might almost seem, to further his betrayal of her he felt a sentimental affection for her, and decided that it was only because of the physical repulsion which her ageing gave him that he did not love her completely and lead an ideal life. He was sorry for himself and for her too because he could not conquer his aversion.

Catherine said, "Julia is particularly handsome to-night."

Charles, with the blank innocence of a self-conscious child, glanced at his wife. "You're right. She is. You dare me to fall in love with her, do you? Think when she gets a good dose of me—"

"Sh-h!"

Charles eyed the door. "Somebody 'ull hear me? Say, Kate, for a manhandler I've never seen your equal." He jumped up, walked twice around the room, and stopped, gazing down at Catherine with a vacant deliberate amusement. Each felt the other the victor in some stealthy unconfessed combat. "All the spice goes out of forbidden fruit when your wife hands it to you on a gold platter with her compliments. That it?" Charles asked. He was wondering if his presentment about Julia as the great thing in his life had been an illusion. He would accept his wife's joke recklessly but that did not prevent his timidity in regard to himself from returning and influencing his acts.

JULIA sat beside Charles while he drove. Laurence and Mrs. Hurst were on the back seat. Julia listened to what Charles said, but half understanding him. Nothing was real to her but the self from which she wanted to escape, this self which she knew would always deceive her. When the car veered at a corner Charles and she were thrown together so that their shoulders touched. She knew that he leaned toward her to prolong the contact.

The warmth of his body gave her no clear consciousness of him, and was a sustained reminder of inscrutable things with which he was not concerned. She despised the humility of his intellect. What attracted her was a kind of primitive cruelty which he tried to hide. She wanted to be consumed by his weakness, to be left nothing of herself. His love-making repelled her. She perceived his sentimentality toward womankind. All that he said was false because unrelated to his fundamental impulse which was to take without giving anything equivalent. She had somehow arrived at the conviction that only the things which hurt her were true. Charles's conception of beauty was childish. But she would not be afraid to abandon herself to the things in him he was ashamed of, which he could not control. When he was conquered, as she was, by the desires his intellect sought to evade, he would be caught in actuality. Neither of them could be deceived. She was impatient with Charles's deference to what he considered her finer feelings. There she found herself insulted by the shallowness of his respect.

Charles made the drive as long as he could, though he knew that his wife, with her prospect of guests

at home, must be growing impatient. He kept, for the most part, in the park where it was easier to imagine that he and Julia were alone. In one place a hill cut off the city and dry grass rushed up before them against the cloudy sunset. Then there were masses of trees, green yet in the half darkness. The branches stirred their blackish foliage, and the copse had a breathing look. The last light broke through the shadowy clouds in metallic flames. When the city came into view again Julia thought that the tall houses were like the walls of a garden flowering with stars.

Every one but Charles was glad when the drive came to an end.

UNDER her large black hat the strange girl's eyes, deep with a shining emptiness, gazed into Paul's. Paul, glancing at her cautiously, felt that the eyes were filled with a velvet dust into which he sank without finding anything. It was as if he were falling, leaden and meaningless, through them.

She had a snub nose with coarse wide nostrils. Her mouth was thick-lipped and over red. She was given to abrupt hilarity when she showed her strong teeth in a peculiarly irrelevant laugh. Her voice

was hoarse. When she threw back her head her amusement made her broad white throat quiver. Then her prominent breasts shook heavily. Her arms, bare below the elbow, looked as though they were meant to be powerful but had grown useless. Her insolence was stupid, but Paul envied it—even though it irritated him that she was so bored with him. They had sat on the same bench in a public square, and after they had fallen into conversation he had asked her to go to dinner with him. Her name was Carrie. She called him "son". She was "out for a good time," she said, but she was "broke".

Paul invited her to the working men's restaurant where he was going himself. To dramatize his isolation from his own group, he wore old clothes, brogans, and his school cap. His appearance suggested a mechanic's assistant. He was ashamed of his secret desire to admit his disguise to her. His uncle was a corporation lawyer who was becoming prominent. Paul had constantly to fight against an ingrained class vanity. Petty bourgeois! Not even snobbishness of the first order! When he had to face it in himself he wanted to die. No use! Hell of a world! Any disillusionment with himself

strengthened his bitterness toward those of his own kind.

WHEN Paul left Carrie he walked into the dark park and seated himself on a bench. The city seemed miles away, sunk in light. There was an iron stillness in the black trunks of the trees that rose about him. Over him the thick foliage hung oppressively in dark arrested clouds.

Despair. He wanted Carrie to admire him. He saw himself strong and bitter in the possession of all that Carries understand. He wanted to be kind. He was a great man, alone, a little proud of his madness. Child! He wanted to go far away—to die. Hate. I can't die! His heart beat loudly and the memory of Carrie was remote again.

In the hidden street Salvationists were passing. He heard hymn tunes and the beat of drums.

Dark angel. I want to save men. He thought of the women, strange in their tight dark dresses. He wanted to save them. Emotionalism. Rot. He tried to remember the working class and economic determinism. Facts. They kept things out. There was a dramatic pride in being outcast, in feeling himself definitely against his aunt and Uncle

Archie. That kid, May. Dead. He gave himself to a sense of loathing that was gorgeous and absolute. His relaxation was drunken—like a dream.

Once more, when he could not but remember May, he recalled Julia instead. He did not explain to himself why he hated her so. It was as though she had done the world some terrible hurt and his was the arrogance of justice in leaving to her nothing of the self she wanted him to believe in. Whenever he saw falseness in women, he felt that he was seeing Julia at last. He wanted his thoughts to destroy her, or at least to leave her utterly beggared. He must prove to himself that it was women like Julia, women of the upper classes, that he had to fight. He could no longer bear the recollection of May going before him through the park in her short dress with her hair a silver paleness over her shoulders. Because of Julia, everything wounded him. He conceived a physical image of Julia in her ultimate day of degradation. When he thought of stripping everything away from her, it was to show a physical ugliness to a deceived world. In anticipation he purged his own soul of all that horrified and confused it. Then he saw her body—that he had never seen—lie before him

like a beaten thing with used maternal breasts, and knew that he had destroyed forever the virginal falsehood of her face. No woman who belonged to a man as Julia belonged to Laurence had the right to a face like hers. He despised his aunt, but she was frankly a part of the hideousness of sex and his contempt for her was negative. Toward Julia he was positive, for he felt that when he had proved everything against her he would not be burdened with May. When he imagined Julia lean and hideous of body, the sense of intimacy with her made him gentle. He was strong and liberated.

However, when actuality presented itself, and he realized that if he met her she would be as he had always known her, kind and a little motherly toward him, his heart grew sullen, and, again, he was helplessly convicted of his youth. His defiance was so acute that he wanted to write her an obscene letter and tell her of what he had done and the women he knew. But he was trapped, as always, in the fear of appearing ridiculous.

It was difficult for him to justify his certainty that she was so much in need of the cleansing fire of truth; yet he would not abandon his conviction. When he had not dared to hate her he had been

at loss before her. Now his hate permitted his imagination complete and unafraid abandon. He dared to relax in the intimacy of dislike because he fancied that he saw her clearly at last.

At times his hate grew too heavy for him, and he could have cried for relief in admitting his childishness to some one. He was shut into himself by that horrible laugh which surrounded him, which he seemed to hear from all sides.

IT was a cool afternoon in September. May walked through the park between rows of flowering shrubs. Here the grass had died and the petals of fallen blossoms were shriveled ivory on the black loam. Overhead the treetops swung with a rotary motion against the rain-choked heavens. The heat of the clouds gathered in a blank stain of brilliance where the swollen sun half burst from its swathings of mist. The wind ceased for a moment. A clump of still pine tops glinted with a black fire, and behind them the sun became a chasm of glowing emptiness, like a hole in the sky, from which the glare poured itself in a diffusing torrent.

For a long time May had not dared to walk in the park. When she did go, at last, she told herself

that she was sure Paul would not come. She felt herself inwardly lost in still bright emptiness. Cold far-off heat. She was a tiny frozen speck, hardly conscious of itself on the burnt grass, walking toward the tall buildings that receded before her. Tall roofs were like iron clouds in the low sky. She wanted to be lost, going farther and farther into emptiness. Now when she said Paul it was no longer Paul she meant. She would have been ashamed before him, tall, looking down at her. Paul was something else, something in which one went out of one's self into infinite distance. Where one went forever, never afraid. Where one ceased to be.

She passed women and children. A child stumbled uncertainly toward her, jam on its face, its dress torn. May was conscious of a part of herself left behind that could see the child running to its mother, the white dress brilliant, fluttering victorious. She knew how her own hair blew out in separate strands from the loosened ends of her braid, and how soft separate strands clung drily against her moist brow under her red cap. Going out of herself, it was as if her blood flowed coldly out of her into the cold sunlight, cold and away from her

body. She was happy. There were tears in her eyes. She wanted to go on forever saying Paul and not thinking what it meant.

The sun went out of sight. The wind lifted the pine boughs and they moved as if in terror against the torn clouds. The sound that went through them died away in peace, in the happiness of being lost. May felt as if something of her had gone forever into the wide still sky and the dead shadowless park. She wanted to feel, not to think. When she thought, she was caught in her body as in a net. The separate parts of her were like pains where she thought Aunt Julia would loathe her.

WHEN Laurence was apart from Julia and remembered her look of humility that asked for something she dared not state, he experienced an almost sickening pity for her. There was something in her suffering which he identified with his own. Yet he did not feel nearer to her in attributing their unhappiness in common to the futile and inevitable circumstances of human life. The pain of each of them, he told himself, was in realizing the isolation in which every human ultimately finds himself when he recognizes that his inner life can-

not be shared. Laurence somehow exulted in seeing Julia forced to accept a condition of existence which had been plain to him for a long time. His despair was so complete that he imagined himself ready to abandon his defenses before her. But when he was actually in her presence she was only the thing that hurt him, and he was against her in spite of himself. Then her cruelty seemed monstrous, because she appeared to understand so little of what she had done. He knew that he bewildered her by showing no resentment toward Dudley Allen. Laurence despised her when she could not see the working of his pride that forced him to be superior to her lover's influence.

Often he said to himself, I'll go away. I can't bear it! But, while he believed in nothing outside himself, what was there to seek? He visited his parents more frequently. To be with them was a fulfilment of his humiliation. He would end where he was born, as every one else did.

Though he was certain that everything which developed through initiative was foredoomed to failure, his pride in Bobby increased. He wanted to keep his pessimism from contaminating his son. Bobby knew his power. When he encountered his

father coming in from the laboratory alone it was a time to make a demand. "Hello, Dad! Say, Dad, *am* I too much of a kid to run a motor cycle? Jack Wilson says I can't run his motor cycle because I'm too much of a kid! Say, Dad, I've got some money saved up. Can't I buy me a motor cycle? I can run it. Honest, I can!" He had been playing in the street, his face dirty and smeared with sweat, his shirt torn in front, and his collar askew. His look was rapt and self-intent. He had the air of pushing his father aside to reach some nidden determination.

Laurence was self-conscious when talking to Bobby. He lowered his lids to conceal the too lenient expression of his eyes. "You're not an experienced mechanic, you know. Only have one life to lose. Better wait a while before you risk it."

Bobby stared with an intentness that obliterated his father's pretense. "Aw, say, Dad, honest, now! I've taken Jack Wilson's machine to pieces. I can run a motor cycle all right. Go on and say I can get it!"

Laurence glanced up, and his smile was hard and cautious, but when his face was averted his features softened immediately. "We'll see, son. I

don't think a brat like you could get a license. Time to talk about it later." He put his hat on a hook and, turning aside, began to mount the stairs.

Bobby, vexed and excited, gazed after his father, regarding Laurence's hesitation as an annoying but inevitable formula which had to be gone through before one could get what one wanted. "Oh, gol darn it!" he said, and ran out into the street again. He tolerated his father.

Laurence wished that he had sent May away with Mr. and Mrs. Price, the parents of his first wife. They had recently gone on a trip to Europe. When they had asked to take Bobby with them, Laurence had resented it.

Julia met Laurence in the upper hall. "Did you tell Bobby to come in and dress for dinner? Isn't he a ragamuffin!" She smiled, imagining that her pleasure in Bobby pleased her husband.

Laurence smiled also, but coldly. He would have preferred to ignore her relationship to Bobby. It had come over him strongly of late that he must take Bobby away from the home environment. "I'm afraid I encourage him in the spontaneity of bad manners." He walked past her with an agree-

able but remote expression that put her away from him.

Julia experienced a familiar pang which contracted her breast with an almost physical surprise. It was as if a touch had made her guilty. Why, she could not say. He doesn't want me to show an interest in Bobby! She was robbed of another—almost her last—certainty.

At dinner she watched the father and son stealthily. Their attitude toward each other seemed to confirm her unknown guilt.

"I've sent off your first quarter's tuition at Mount Harrod, young man. You haven't much time left with us."

Bobby was secretly resigned but confident in his petulance. "Gee, Dad, I don't want to go to that place!"

"It's about time you began your initiation in the subtler forms of self-defense," Laurence said sardonically.

May, ignored by everybody, sat very straight in her chair and was over dainty with her food, as if timid of her enjoyment of it. Julia, withdrawing all attempt at contact with Laurence and Bobby, could not bear to look at the girl.

Laurence was uncomfortably admitting to himself that, in some subtle way, his desire to have Bobby out of the house was directed by a feeling against Julia. He wondered how much of his motive she had perceived. The sooner he gets away from the hoax of home, the better, Laurence told himself. He tried to exculpate himself by a generalization. It was the false ideal he wanted to destroy for Bobby. Julia was a part of the myth, though she had not created it.

JULIA was wounded without knowing just what her wound was. She said to herself, unexpectedly, If I had a child! My God, if I had a child! The thought, which had been strange to her for a long time, seemed to illumine all of her being. It was as if something warm and secret were already her own. She was on the point of weeping with terror of her longing for the child that did not exist. It was something she wanted to take away to herself which no one else should know of. She considered how she might get herself with child without any one becoming aware of it. She wanted a child that would be helpless with her, that she could give everything to.

But she could not bear the thought of definite responsibilities connected with a child. It was wrong to want a child like that. It was like robbing a thing of its life to want it so completely. It had a right to itself. She felt virtuously bereaved already, as if the child that had never been born had grown to manhood and she had given it up.

There was no peace except in the abnegation of all positive desire. She invited the peace of helplessness. When her emotions were formless she felt immense and lost in a waking sleep. The whole world was her own dream. She could feel her physical life fade out of her and imagined that her hair was growing white.

CHARLES HURST had not been so happy for a long time. To evoke one of his moods of glowing pathos, he had only to gaze at himself in a mirror and think of Julia. She had committed herself but very little, yet he was mystical in his certainty of their future relationship. When he recalled the way she looked at him as if asking him not to hurt her too much he was confirmed in his belief that she had laid aside the subterfuges of more commonplace and less courageous women.

"Damned if I look as young as I did!" He studied his reflection ruefully. He had a hazy perception of his outward defects and regretted them. "Growing old's hell all right! Poor little Kate!" He was ashamed of the comfort of seeming less his age than she. His sense of advantage made him tenderly apologetic. When he was near her he wanted to pet her. "Rum deal women get. Life after forty-five not worth much." He almost wished it possible for her to console herself as he did, but he could not quite bring himself to accept the logic of his imagining. Catherine with a lover! Women not the same as we are. Men are a lot of —— donkeys. Pity the girl never had a kid.

His pale eyes grew grave and retrospective again, and he seated himself on the edge of his bed just as he was, in socks and trousers and undershirt, burying his face in his curiously formless hands. "By God, I love that girl!" He threw his head up and shrugged his shoulders with a shivering motion, as if what he felt were almost too much for him. "She may think I'm a senile idiot and a damn fool—all the things Catherine does." He smiled, talking aloud. "But she loves me! She loves me! By God, she loves me! She's got to!" He ended

on a playfully emphatic note as though he were disposing of an invisible argumentator. When he went into his bathroom to shave he whistled Musetta's Waltz from La Boheme. There was an expression of innocent complacency on his thin good-humored face. For a time he was absorbed in his music and his sense of completeness and well-being.

Julia Farley. Too good. That Goode family. Bills. Fellow runs a car like— Fast. Fast women. I hold her fast. I—

When his jumbled thoughts had proceeded to I-hold-her-fast, something welled up as if from the depths of him, and he was physically blinded by the dim intensity of his emotion. He frowned painfully. He began to speak aloud again. "Too much, Charles, my boy. Too old for this kind of thing. Damn! She's too good—too lovely—"

There was a knock at the door. Johnson, Mr. Hurst's man, was never allowed in the room while his master was dressing, since Charles was frankly embarrassed by the presence of a valet.

"Hello! Hello, Johnson."

"Telephone, sir. Mrs. Hurst wanted me to ask if you'd like to come, or if I was to tell them to call later."

Julia! The mad hope that it was Julia.

"It's Mr. Goode, sir. He says he can't give me the message."

God, but I'm ridiculous! "Mr. Goode, eh?" Charles, very abstracted, buttoned on his shirt. "Well, you tell Goode I'll call him later, Johnson." As Johnson, assenting in his delicately servile manner, was turning away, Charles beckoned him back. "Eh, Johnson, just between you and me, while the madam isn't looking. Suppose you bring me up—just a little, you know—Old Scotch. God damn this collar button!"

Johnson, who was a blond young man with a wise subdued air, smiled a little. Finding it flattered his employers, he had cultivated the sad manner of a professional mourner. "Very good, sir."

As Johnson disappeared, Charles's ruminations broke forth afresh. "'Very good, sir!' Damn little son-of-a-gun! He'd do well in a play. Got a fine contempt for the old man, Johnson has. Yep, by God, Catherine has got me on breeding. Servants never bat an eye at her. Might have been born with a gold spoon in her mouth. Well, she's a pink-face and the old boy's a rough-neck. Tra-la-la—" He resumed Musetta's Waltz.

"That Blanche—that damned little hyper-sexed, hyper-sophisticated, hyper-everything— By Jove, she'd pinch the gold plate out of a mummy's tooth!" When Charles talked he allowed his voice gradually to mount the scales until it broke on a falsetto note. It was part of the horseplay with which his dramatic sense responded, in self-derision, to the attitude of those about him. Catherine insisted on his occasional attendance at the opera, and Pagliacci, which he heard first, was his favorite piece. He identified himself with the title part, though it was a little confusing for him to imagine himself a deceived husband. He felt that the author of the libretto had confused the issue. "Blanche, by God, that Blanche!" He referred to a young woman who took minor parts in cinema plays. He wanted to be rid of her. She was statuesque and theatric, but as his intimacy with her had grown she had relapsed into habitual vulgarities which grated on him. Charles revered a lady. Besides, since becoming interested in Julia he wanted to forget everything else. Blanche was realizing that she had destroyed an illusion through which she might have furthered her ambition, and she was growing recklessly spiteful and crude. Only the day before

Charles had sent her money which she had kept, though she reviled him for sending it. His humility made it impossible for him to condemn any one, except in extreme moments of self-defense. "Poor little girl! By Jove, I wonder if she did love me a little after all!" He shook his head, and smiled with an expression of sentimental weariness. He put Blanche away as incongruous with the thought of Julia which filled him with happiness.

"Sick o' the whole mess of 'em. That fellow, Goode, making a damn jackass of himself every time a chorus girl winks at him. The whole damn cheap, sporting, booze-fighting lot of nincompoops. Goode's a grandfather and he looks it."

The door moved softly, there was a light rap, and Johnson re-entered with a tray. Charles laid his hair brushes down. "Looks good to me, Johnson." Johnson smiled his sad, half-perceptible smile. "Shall I mix it, sir?"

"No—Johnson. No." With an air of ostentatious casualness, Charles poured whisky into a glass and held it up to the light. "Good stuff." Johnson kept his still smile, but did not speak.

Charles drank with deliberate noisiness. When he set the glass down he drew a deep theatric sigh.

His face was solemn. "Better try some, Johnson."

The man flushed slightly. "Anything else?"

"No, no. Coming downstairs. The madam had her breakfast yet?"

"I don't know, sir. That is, I think so, sir." Johnson turned away and the door swung soundlessly across his rigid back.

Charles gave himself a little more whisky that brought the tears of relaxation to his eyes. He wondered if he were mistaken about Julia. He dared not consider future potentialities too definitely, though he told himself that, whatever came, he was ready for it. Would she ever let him put his head in her lap? He felt good and complacent when he imagined it. The pose it represented was assumed with such sincerity and was so remote from the aspect of him with which his wife was acquainted, or even the guise he bore to his sporting friends. It was pleasant to him to recognize this secret and not too obvious self. "Well, Charles, you old rooster, you may have broken most of the commandments, and you can't talk Maeterlinck and Tagore with the old lady, but there's something to you they all miss. The dear!" he added, thinking of Julia.

IT was Saturday afternoon. The holiday crowd moved in endless double lines along an endless street. As Julia walked with it there was a hill before her and the stream of motor cars floated over the crest against a pale sky hazy with dust. Men stared at her and, feeling naked and unpossessed, she demanded their look.

"Miss Julia!" She glanced up, hearing a car whirr to a standstill beside her. Mr. Hurst was driving a gray racer. He was bareheaded. The wind had disarranged his sleek hair, revealing his baldness. He smoothed back the locks. He gazed at her a little fearfully, but his face was happy and intent. "I've caught you. Going anywhere? Let me take you for a ride?" He saw her eyes, the outline of her breasts, her cloth dress blown against her long legs, her ungloved hands with their beautiful helpless look. "You are tired." Tender of her fatigue, he was grateful to her because she allowed him this tenderness. His heart beat so heavily that he fancied it must be fluttering the breast of his silk shirt. She must think me a fool, dear girl! I love her! He was conscious of being a little mad in his delight, and wanted to lay his faults before her. "How's this? I'm going to run

away with you—take you off to the country." Julia was beside him. The car glided on.

"I can't be long." Julia stared into his eyes with a calm smile, and tried to be simple and detached. She told herself that she could do nothing for him, but that she wanted him to understand her loneliness.

"Well, we're going to be long—ever so long." Her hair is all in a mess—clouds about her eyes. Her little feet walking on clouds. Oh, Julia, my darling, I love you! She's not like other women I have known. If she gives herself to a caress it means something to her. "I've been looking forward to this—longing for it," he said. "You know that ever since that night I kissed you I've thought of almost nothing but you?"

Julia said, "I'm sorry."

"Why?" All at once everything confusing was being swept away in the nakedness of the wind they rode against. "Going too fast for you—dear?"

"No. But you mustn't think of me so much."

"Why?"

"Because—I'm not worth it." Hypocrite. She wanted to be beautiful. She had a horrible sense of her own spiritual leanness and ugliness. If he

would take me away—kiss me—anywhere—in darkness. She wanted to belong to some one so utterly as to make her oblivious of herself.

They turned a sharp corner. They were in the park now. Pale leaves, yellow against the light, floated, and fell upon them in a shower of silk. "I'm in love with you, Julia."

"Are you?"

"Don't *ask*. You know it. Don't you want me to be?" Goode—too good. Hadn't meant to say that yet!

"I don't know. I'm afraid I'm a disillusioned person. I'm tired watching people try to live through others. It can't be done."

"I think I could live in you—through you—if you'd let me, Julia."

"You don't know me."

"How can I if you won't let me, Julia?" He drew the car nearly to a standstill. He grasped her fingers with his free hand. "I'm going to kiss you, dear." It was lonely here. She felt his mouth over her face and was ashamed of her distaste for him. "You're unhappy, Julia. Why are you unhappy?"

She withdrew herself. "I am—horribly."

Charles, hardening, felt relieved, and imagined

himself stronger. Farley don't treat her well, he said to himself. In his mind was a furtive expectation, with which was mingled an unadmitted thought of divorce. "Don't be, darling. You make me too happy. It's not fair. Can't I be anything to you —even a little?"

Julia laughed pathetically. "You must be. I'm here."

"Yes, thank God, you are. And you're not going to be disgusted with me because I'm such an unpretentious human animal? My taste in music runs about as high as The Old Oaken Bucket, and I suppose if I'd been left to myself I'd have canned those Dudley Allen productions you persuaded Catherine to buy, and hung up Breaking The Home Ties instead. You know all this new art stuff goes over my head, child. Hate me for it?"

"Not very much. Perhaps it goes over my head too."

"Wish it did, but Kate's told me all about you. You're so damned clever." He wanted her, yet, even if she offered herself to him now, he could not touch her. Her little feet. As a matter of fact they weren't small. Little feet just the same. Must be white. White feet. Lovely things walking over

his heart. Beautiful things hurt him with their pride. He had felt this before about women. It was always wrong. Afterward only the pain and the longing remained. She's different. Mine. I can't have her. "You won't hate me when—" His eyes misted. He gave her a blurred look. His lips were humorous and self-contemptuous.

"Won't hate you when?" Julia was still motherly.

It hurt him to speak. His face was flushed. He stared at her fixedly an instant, as if something stood between them. She observed his unsteady mouth, that was weakly unconscious of itself like a desperate child's. "Am I going to have you, Julia? Are you disgusted with me, child?"

She would not consider clearly what he meant, but she wanted him to shut Laurence out of her mind. "Yes. I think so." Her voice was unsteady.

The car went on, they were out of town among suburban roads and vacant lots. Charles drew up again. "Let's get out and walk a bit."

The dry pinkish grass moved before them like a cloud over the field. It rustled stiffly about their ankles. The low sun was in their eyes. Double lines of gnats rose into the light. They passed an empty house with glaring uncovered windows.

White feet that hurt. Charles was afraid of her. He imagined her hands touching him. Oh, my dear! He said, "We must find a way to see each other."

Julia said nothing. He took hold of her arms hesitatingly. "Look at me!"

She was ashamed for him. When their eyes met, hers filled with tears. She seemed to herself dead, and wanted him to be sorry for her. I can't live. I'm dead already. No use. I'm dead! I'm dead! She wanted to be dead. Something kept alive, torturing her.

"Take your hat off, won't you?" She took her hat off. Clouds. "Now I can look at you." She wondered if she looked ill. She was ashamed for him when he trembled. Her eyes were gentle, and at the same time there was something desperate in them. It seemed to him that she was asking him to hurt her, and he wanted to say, Don't, don't! Her face, that he could not bear to understand, was just a blur of sweetness. He believed that her tenderness for him was something which must be tried by the grossness of his pleasure in physical contact with her. He thought his pleasure in her body would make her suffer. Afterward he meant to

show her how little that was, and that what he was giving her—what he was asking of her—was really something else. "I want to be your lover, child." It was done. He was conscious of desperation and relief. She's different! My God, she's different! Blanche. All of them. He pitied himself with them.

Julia said, "I know it."

Why does she smile like that? Forgive me. He felt their two bodies, hers and his, pitiful helpless things. His shame was for her too. "Life, child! It's got us," he said. "Now I'll kiss you just once." He gathered her up in his arms. She's trembling too. She loves me! I want to make her happy. He wondered why everything hurt so. She's too fine.

Julia was cold. Frozen all over. It seemed he would never be done kissing her. She despised him, and enjoyed the bitterness of her gratitude in being loved. When she could speak she said, smiling yet, "We'd better be starting back. It's late. Look at the sun." The meadow was filled with cold light that lay on the grass tops and made them burning and colorless. The sun, as if dissolving, was formless and brilliant on the horizon.

"Have you had enough of me? Do you want to leave me, Julia?"

"No. It's only that when I left home it was for a little while."

As they walked back to the car, Charles, holding Julia's hand, pressed it apologetically. "I want to take you to a place I have, Julia—a cabin I go to sometimes for fishing trips. We could motor there and picnic for a day. Could you be with me as long as that without becoming more disillusioned?" He tried to joke. His thin face jested, but his pale eyes were anxious.

Julia said, in a smothered voice, "You mustn't love me too much. You are the one who will be disillusioned."

He wanted to talk to her about Laurence, but as yet did not dare; so he pressed her hand again. "Darling!" She returned the pressure and was piqued by his abstracted glance. I'm alone, she said to herself.

ON the following Saturday Julia went with Charles to the cabin he had spoken of. It was on the shore of a small lake, only a few feet removed from the water's edge. It was a still

cloudy day, and the lake, choked with sedges, had a heavy look, like a mirror coated with grease. There were pine woods all around that, without undergrowth, seemed empty. The still trees were like things walking in a dream. Julia felt them, not moving, going on relentlessly and spurning the earth. It seemed as if everything in the landscape had been forgotten. It was a memory held intact that no one ever recalled. A little group of scrub oaks were turning scarlet. They were like colored shadows.

Charles drew up his motor car in the half-obliterated roadway, and helped Julia to alight. He felt sinful, as he always did when he was about to enjoy anything. He wished that he might beg Julia to condescend to him as to an inferior being. He would be grateful for her contempt which, if it were tempered by affection, would allow him to be himself.

She went ahead of him, and waited in the dusty portico of the small house while he covered some cushions that might be wet if it rained. When he came toward her his eyes were uncertain. "Here we are. Damn it, Julia, I'm so happy I'm afraid!"

You aren't going to mind being here?" He carried a picnic basket.

"Of course not. Why should I have come?"

He set the basket down. "Hands all grimy. Why should you! God, I don't know. I'm going to love you." He swung her hands in his delightedly, but there was something stealthy and embarrassed in his manner. He could not bring himself to kiss her. "At least you're not going to try to make a new man of me!"

"I know my limitations."

"You haven't any, darling."

Julia's mouth was happy, but her eyes were dark and unkind. "It makes one uncomfortable to be thought too well of." She knew that she was about to give herself to him and resented his confidence. He was a crude childlike man. At the same time, she sensed a simplicity in him that was almost noble. Her self-esteem could not endure thinking of a possible debt to him.

"Shall we go in?" He opened the door and went in ahead of her. The place was crowded with camp beds, piled one on top of the other, and numbers of more or less dilapidated chairs. There was a thick coating of dust over everything, and films

of spider web across the window panes yellowed the light. "Isn't this a disgrace, child? I ought to have had a house-cleaning before we came out."

"I like work. We'll clean up together." She removed her hat and laid it on a table. Charles took off his coat. He found an old broom, swept up the trash that littered the floor, and began to pull the furniture into place. Julia discovered a torn shirt and used it to clean the window glass. Charles felt the morning was passing grotesquely. I love her. What shall I do! "Jove, I wish we lived here!" he said. When he had laid a fire in the stone chimney, he pulled out one of the camp beds and made a divan with blankets and pillows. "Come sit down here and warm yourself, child." He turned his back to her and began warming his hands. "It's damp in here."

Julia came to the fire. She did not seat herself. He knew she was beside him. He put off the moment when he must look at her. As he finally turned, his suffused eyes avoided hers. He was smiling miserably. "Have I made a mistake?"

Julia felt blind inside herself. "Mistake?" She laughed nervously.

He fumbled for her hands. "Julia!" His emotion could no longer distinguish between her and himself. His face was in her hair. "I can't help it, child! I can't help it!"

Finding herself futile and inadequate, it seemed to Julia that her pity for herself must include all the things that surrounded her, and that she must embrace them in the mingled agony of self-contempt and pride. It was because she did not love him that it liberated her so completely to give herself to him. She tried to abase herself utterly so that she might experience the joy of rising above her own needs.

Her tears were on his hands and he was bewildered. The contagion of her emotion overpowered him. He was equally astonished at her and at himself. For a moment he was unable to speak. "Oh, Julia—my Julia—I love you!" He could not comprehend himself. Why was it that even now, when she surrendered herself to him, he continued to feel helpless and almost terrified. He had not imagined that she loved him as deeply as this. His desire to abase himself, though it arose from a different motive, was as complete as hers. "Julia,"

he kept repeating, "don't! What is it, Julia? Don't!" He wanted to kiss her feet. What is it? What have I done? He found himself at the mercy of something unknown that was cheating them when they should have had happiness. "Do you love me, Julia?" He observed her expression of tenderness and suffering. Yet, while she was telling him that she loved him, it seemed to him that he was ignored and obliterated by what she was feeling.

Julia sat on the camp bed and, as he had promised himself, he knelt beside her and buried his face in her lap. Still, though he did not admit it, he knew the gesture was false. He was embarrassed by his hostility to her pity. He believed now that he loved her far more than he had loved her before. He could no longer articulate his situation or his intentions, or anything practical connected with his life. He decided that, though she made him unhappy, life would only be endurable if he saw her more frequently and in a franker relationship. How this was to be brought about he dared not reflect. When Laurence's name was on his lips he recalled Catherine and the pain of indecision made him dumb.

Julia felt that even this last attempt to lose herself was a failure. While she stroked his hair, she was furtively considering whether or not she dared see him again.

LAURENCE knew now that his attitude regarding Bobby was apparent to Julia, and that it caused her pain. Why he punished her by keeping her apart from his son and making her ill at ease when the child was present he could not have said. However, though he realized absurdities in himself, he would not renounce his sense of righteousness. What he suffered through compunction was to him the pain of virtue. He hurt Julia in order to convince himself of her depth of feeling. While he observed her misery, he could believe that she would not betray him again. Her agony was his, but it showed him that she was not callous and indifferent to the consequences of her acts. He could not yet allow himself to express any love for her. He would not even admit his desire to do so. In the meantime, without understanding his expectation, he waited and withheld himself. When she looked at him there was always in her eyes the demand of self-pity. When she would accept, as he did, the rec-

ognition that there was nothing, that there could be nothing, he would not be afraid to give himself. He struggled with his tenderness for her. It was always tearing at him. He was never at rest. Because he put the thought of her out of his mind, he seemed to have no thoughts at all—only an emptiness consuming him. He tried to comfort himself with generalities and reverted to the illusory finality of the positivist philosophy which he had at one time professed.

Julia decided that self-loathing was the inevitable outgrowth of profound experience. Others, who were as fully self-aware as she, were filled with the same nausea of futility. She had several times talked to Charles Hurst on the telephone, and the sound of his voice always exhilarated her. When she sensed his emotion in speaking with her, a kind of iron seemed to enter into her despair. Her distaste for contact with him only convinced her of the pride of her recklessness. The more intimate their relationship became, the more voluptuously she scourged herself by her accurate perceptions of his deficiencies. Only by seeing him at his worst could she preserve her gratification in being tender to him and careless of her own interest.

JULIA was continually irritated by the trivial routine of daily existence. The banality of life was humiliating to her. Always, before she went to the laboratory, she stopped in the kitchen to give Nellie the orders for the day. The poised indifference of the old woman's manner never failed to have an almost maddening effect. "Is the butter out, Nellie? Shall I order any sugar this week?" Nellie's opaque, self-engrossed eyes were continually fixed on some distant object. "Yas'm. I reckon you bettah odah sugah. Dey's plenty o' buttah." Julia smiled and tapped her foot on the bare, clean-scrubbed boards. "You're frightfully inattentive, Nellie." Nellie's full purplish lips pouted ruminatively. Her face was like a stone. "I always tends to what's mah business, Miss Julia. You has yo' ways an' I has mine." And Julia, in puzzled defeat, invariably left the kitchen.

When she encountered May, it was as bad. The girl's vapid, apologetic smile suggested the stubborn resistances of weakness. "Do you love your negligent Aunt Julia, May?" May would give a sidewise glance from soft protesting eyes. Then Julia, realizing that she should be touched by May's affection, would put her arms about the girl.

But Julia found herself actively disliking the child who forced upon her an undefined sense of responsibility, elicited by the exhibition of unhappiness. "Now, May, dear, I know you love me—you funny, sensitive little thing!" Julia's perfunctory tone was a subtle and deliberate repulse.

May, wanting to hide herself, pressed her forehead against her sleeve. Julia tried to pull May's arms apart, and wondered at her own satisfaction in the brutality of the gesture. It seemed to May that Aunt Julia's hands were about to tear open her heart. "Angry with me, May? This is so silly."

With an effort, May lifted her quivering face to Aunt Julia's cold eyes, and giggled. "Of course not." She wanted to keep Aunt Julia from looking at her and knowing her.

"You aren't, eh? Well, be a good girl. There!" A kiss, meekly accepted. How Julia abhorred that meekness! "Where's Paul these days? He hasn't run away to the South Seas or some such place without telling us good-by?" Julia felt guilty when she referred to him. But Paul and May were children. That explained away an unnamed thing.

"I—I don't know." Again May giggled.

"Why don't you go to see Lucy Wilson?"

"I don't know. I don't care much about going anywhere."

My God, what's to become of the girl! Why should she live, Julia thought.

MRS. HURST was finding it more and more difficult to face her husband. Something which was becoming chronic in his manner aroused a suspicious protest in her. When, in the morning, he entered the breakfast room and found her already seated at the table, she bit her lips, and between her brows appeared a little invariable frown. Charles was a mystery to her. She wanted him to be a mystery. The thing she had to fight against most was the recognition of his obviousness. A child! A ridiculous grown-up child! Quite incomprehensible. And when her reflections culminated too logically she put them aside with an emphasis on "the sacredness of sex". There were flirtations, trivial improprieties, she knew, and she admitted them. Perhaps all men were like that, spiritually so immature. But where the flesh impinged upon her dream there was only an excited darkness in which she defiantly closed her eyes.

"Mrs. Wilson is going out to Marburne this week, Charles. She's organizing a distributing center for the country women. They are quite out of touch with the city markets and some of them make such wonderful things—jams and embroideries, needlework and the like. She's trying to get coöperation from other people who summer there. She wants to build an industrial school for the girls, and is willing to put up a third of the necessary money if others will contribute the rest. She wants me to go out there with her and speak in various country schools." Catherine was resisting the conviction that something critical was occurring in her husband's inner life. The idea of going away from the city, and leaving him, in such a state, to his own devices, frightened her. To admit the necessity of remaining, however, was to concede the existence of an issue. When he looked at her, it was as if he said, I'm like this, but I can't help it, so forgive me. She did not wish to know what that look meant. For years she had warded off crises by merely ignoring their imminence. She dared not abandon the serviceable belief that the disturbing elements of life cease to confuse us if we refuse to admit that they exist. She called this, Rising

above our lower selves. There is so much truth, you know, in the religions of the Orient. At the same time, Catherine's transcendental generalizations did not save her from bitterness. Life was difficult, and Charles had left her more than her share of responsibility for its solution.

Charles regarded his wife wistfully, almost sentimentally. He made a good-humored grimace. "Mrs. Wilson going to carry sweetness and light to Marburne, is she?" He was crumbling bread between his blunt unsteady fingers, and scattering it on the table cloth. What was he thinking of?

Catherine smiled at him, a perplexed resentful smile, a trifle hard. He was unhappy before her. There was something cold and watchful half-hidden in her eyes beneath her pleasantly wrinkled lids. "Mrs. Wilson is a very valuable, capable woman."

Charles grimaced gallantly but derisively. He was leaning one elbow on the table, and now he caught the flesh above his nose and pinched it with his thumb and forefinger as if to still a hurt. "Yes," he agreed with light absence. "By Jove, I know it! Every time I see poor old Jack Wilson it reminds me of how capable she is."

Catherine agreed to be amused, though her mouth

was severe. "Ridicule is an easy way out of difficulty, Charles."

"Difficulty? Is it? Damn me, I wish it was!" He pushed his plate aside and pressed the fingers of both hands against his lowered brow.

Catherine, determinedly complacent, tapped her foot under the table and ate daintily. The nervous frown reasserted itself and she smoothed it away with an effort.

Charles lifted his head, as with a sudden sweetly-depressing resolution. "So you're going away. When?"

Catherine was diligently attentive to her food. "Perhaps I may not be able to go. I have so many important things—" She hesitated.

Charles rose, as if imperatively desirous of physical expression. He halted a moment by the table. Catherine had no name for his saccharine melancholy, but she detested it. "I haven't been such a hell of a husband, have I, Kate?" Ridiculous, she thought. She saw his mouth twitch. She was afraid. He touched her hair and she bore it. "Things might have been worse for you, Kate."

She sensed in his pity for her a phase of the pity for himself which supplied the excuse for all his

shortcomings. "You'll muss my hair, Charles. I think life has treated me very well indeed—both of us, I should say."

"We men are a rough lot, but we mean well. Time for me to get down to the dirty world of commerce." His hand dropped away from her. He took out his watch.

White feet—he was tired.

Catherine did not glance up as he went out. She was hostile toward his disappearing back that was invisible to her. She laid her knife and fork very precisely on her plate. When she spoke to the servant who came to clear away the dishes, her manner, though kind, was peculiarly severe.

CHARLES had long ago definitely decided, though on no more than circumstantial evidence, that Julia had no life with her husband, and now he wanted her to the point of divorcing Catherine. Of course he had as yet said nothing decisive to either Julia or his wife. Until he was prepared to act it seemed to him unnecessary to speak.

It was night. He was in his room alone. Without removing his clothes he threw himself on the

bed, soiling the handsome counterpane with his polished shoes. Mentally he reviewed the histories of those of his friends who had taken some such steps as he was contemplating. The more he thought about the domestic upheavals which he had noted from a safe distance, the more it was borne in upon him that, no matter how great his desire to avoid causing suffering, the moment he began to act positively, suffering for others would result from anything that he did.

Charles had never found himself able to inflict even a just punishment. Wherever possible he avoided the sight of pain. In the street he would go a block out of his intended way to evade the familiar spectacle of some wretched beggar. In doing so, his relief in escape was greater than his sense of guilt. If he was approached directly for whatever pathetic cause he always gave away everything that was in his pocket, and only asked that no one remind him of the occasion of his generosity. His wife was an efficient charity worker. Every quarter year he allowed her a sum—always above what her practical nature would have dictated—to dispose of in the alleviation of physical distress. He deferred to her common sense, and was glad to

be relieved of the depressing knowledge of particular cases. As regarded legislative remedies for wrongs, he was conservative where his business dealings were affected, but had an open sympathy with revolutionary protests on the part of oppressed peoples in any far-off European or Asiatic state. He had persuaded himself that extreme measures were needed to compel fair play from the ancient orthodoxies abroad, while reformatory methods could achieve everything at home.

He decried the prevalence of divorce, and the disintegration of the home. Yet never, in a given instance, had he been able to condemn the friend or acquaintance who had become dissatisfied with his wife and sought happiness by forming new ties. Maternity in the abstract represented to him a confused and embarrassing ideal. But he recalled his own mother, who had never loved him, with a pain he did not attempt to analyze.

He was thinking now of young Goode's wife, who, before her marriage was a year old, had run away with another man. Two days previously Charles had met young Goode in the street. To keep from listening to any reminiscence of the affair, Charles

had talked to him rapidly in a jocular voice and taken him off to his club to give him a drink.

Charles turned in the bed, groaned, and hid his face. If only Catherine were far away! Had gone abroad for a trip, or something like that! He believed that the emotion he experienced when he held Julia in his arms or knelt with his head in her lap was unlike anything that had ever before come to him. He felt that through Julia he had discovered qualities in himself by which he could lift himself from the banal plane where he had been placed by others. The imposed acceptance of limitations had humiliated him. It was not so much Julia that he was afraid of losing, as the quality within him which he felt she alone could evoke. He knew his own weakness too well. If, at this crisis, he could not bring himself to initiate a change, the miracle which was present would lose its potency, and he would be convicted forever of the triviality which his friends saw in him.

Charles rose to a sitting posture and threw off his coat. When he lay down again he covered his eyes with his stubby fingers. The revealed lower portion of his florid face was harsh and drawn. He could count the pulse jumping in his temples where

his hands pressed. His weak lips, unconscious of themselves, looked shriveled with unhappiness. As the tears came under his lids and slipped down his cheeks, his chin shook, and he made a grimace like a contorted smile. All his gestures were cumbersome and pathetic. He wanted the love that would not despise his indecisions. At this moment he feared that even Julia might not be equal to it.

He despised his cowardice, yet had a certain pride in the frankness of his self-confession. Christianity, in his mind, had to do with sanctimonious puritanism. He resisted with disgust what he understood to be the Christian conception of humility. But he wanted to trust people and lay himself at their feet. Not all—one woman's feet.

There was nothing else for it! His thoughts were betraying him. He had to have alcohol. He rolled to one side of the bed, tore his collar open, and staggered to his feet. Already, the resolution to indulge himself softened the clash of uncertainties. When he had gone to a cellarette, and taken a drink from a decanter there, his misery grew warm and sweet. His body was inundated in the hot painful essence of his own soul. He was helpless and at ease, bathed in himself.

Standing by the window, he watched the cold small moon rising above the houses on the other side of the street. Strange and alone in whiteness, it flashed above the dark roofs that glistened with a purplish light. Charles, startled by the poesy of his own mood, compared it to a piece of shattered mirror reflecting emptiness. He was ingenuously surprised by his imaginings. Staring, with his large naïve eyes, at the glowing moon in the profound starless sky, he was convinced of an incredible beauty in everything, but particularly in himself.

PAUL knew that in a fortnight he was expected to be away at college. Without having spoken to any one of his resolve, he had decided on rebellion. Of late he had been a regular attendant at industrial gatherings. When he talked to Socialists, Communists, or even people with anarchistic leanings, he was conscious of making himself absurd with the illogical violence of his remarks. He felt that he was continually doing himself an injustice, for almost everything he said suggested that he was taking the side of the oppressed only to gratify a personal spite. At the same time, he confessed to himself that the revolution pleased him doubly

when it emphasized the triviality and complacency of women like Julia and her friends, who titillated their vanity by trifling with matters which concerned the actual life and death of a huge, semi-submerged class.

On one occasion he listened to the tempestuous speech of a young Rumanian Jewess, and was exalted by the mere passion of her words, irrespective of their content. It seemed beautiful to him that this young woman, under the suspicion of the police, was able to express her faith with such utter recklessness. He wished that he too might endanger himself. He hated the bourgeois comfort of his uncle's home. In order to achieve such righteous defiance it was necessary to suffer something at the hands of the enemy. Instead of running away to sea, as he had at first planned, he decided that he ought to go into a factory to work, and live in a low quarter of the city. There was Byronic pleasure in imagining the loneliness that would be his lot. His desperation would be a rebuke to those who despised him as a credulous youth. Above everything, he wanted to be poor and socially lost. When he was at home, his uncle nagged him and

his aunt watched him continually with curiosity and resentment. She thought he was lazy, that he lounged about the streets and was untidy in his dress.

Paul haunted slums where sex in its crudest form was always manifest. He treasured his aversion to it. The deeper understanding of life had lifted him above its necessities. He was never so much in the mood to enter the battle for industrial right, in utter disregard of selfish interests, as after resisting an appeal to what he termed his elemental nature. Then he became impatient of his exclusion from present dangers.

At last he was introduced to the Rumanian Jewess he had so much admired. But when he saw that she was interested in men, and even something of a coquette, it filled him with repugnance. He observed much in her that he had not taken account of before. There was something coarse and sensual in her heavy figure. Her skin, that was dark and oily, now appeared to him unclean. And in her friendly eyes, with their look of frank invitation, he discovered a secret depravity. This made him question the need to merge his sense of self in the

impersonal self of the working class. It seemed certain that, to remain pure for leadership, he must live apart.

IN the vague morning street figures passed dimly on their way to work. The sun, half visible, melted in pale rays that trembled on the wet roofs of houses. The diffused shadows lay on the pavements in transparent veils. Julia, on her way to the laboratory, saw Paul walking in front of her, stooping, a tall, awkward figure with a cap pulled over its face. She called, "Paul!" She noticed that he hesitated perceptibly before he glanced back. In her state of mind she felt rebuked for everything that went wrong around her. Paul's hesitation challenged her conscience.

He turned and awaited her approach. She took his cold limp fingers. He seemed shy—almost angry—and would not look at her. "May and I have missed you, Paul. Were you trying to run away from me?" A moment before hearing her voice he had felt worldly and old and self-possessed. He hated himself because, at the time, she always obliged him to believe in her estimate of him rather than his own. He walked along beside her with his hands

in his pockets, his head lowered. "Until I met your aunt the other day I thought you had taken the long voyage you were always talking about. We haven't been such bad friends that we deserve to be ignored, have we?"

Paul said, "I haven't been to see anybody."

She thought his reserve sulky. "Aren't you going to college in a few days?"

Paul turned red. He was all against her. "I think a lot of college is a waste of time."

"I suppose it is, but one might waste time much more disastrously."

"I feel that going to college would be hypnotizing myself for four years so I wouldn't know what real people were doing."

"Surely there are some real people in college!"

"Well, they manage to hide themselves. No college professor would ever let you know that there was such a thing as a class struggle going on!"

Poor child! Why is he so angry! "I see you're still very much interested in economics."

"Well, I haven't much use for the theoretical side of it."

"I thought economics was all theory."

Paul's intolerance scarcely permitted him to an-

swer her. Most women, who go in for making the world right over a cup of tea, do! "If anything good comes to the working people of this country it will be through direct action." He could not go on. His words suffocated him. He knew that she was cursing him once more with the sin of youth. "I can't expect people who don't know anything about actual conditions to agree with me." His trembling hands fumbled helplessly in his pockets. It was all dim between them. Love. I must love the world. She has never suffered. It was almost as if she must suffer before he could go on with what he believed. The world that was old seemed stronger and harder than he could bear. People work because they must starve otherwise. She goes to work that is only another diversion. They die. I could die. Dead beast. Beauty and the beast. His heart was like a stone.

Julia, watching him as they walked, saw his gullet move in his long stooped neck. Poor awkward child! "I like you for feeling all this, Paul. I used to feel the same things."

"I suppose you don't believe in them now!"

"I'm afraid I don't, Paul—not entirely. So many people have tried." She was jealous of the child's

illusion, but at the same time complacently sad. He doesn't know me. The boy doesn't know me. Pity, baby, Dudley, Charles, Laurence.

"It wouldn't be hopeless if they didn't all pat themselves on the back for being disillusioned."

"What would you think then if I said I envied you?" She loved him for misjudging her. It magnified the importance of her loneliness. They were at a crossing where they must part. "Are you going this way?" What makes the child look at me like that! He's unhappy. Paul said, "No." "Then you'll come to see us—come to see May and me?" His hand did not take hers, only permitted her grasp. She smiled and went on, feeling that she was leaving something behind that she had meant to keep.

He remembered her eyes, proud and humble at the same time, that asked of him. As she left him it was as if he were dying. I must love some one! He thought of her soul, a physical soul, meager and abandoned. All at once an unasked thing possessed him. I love her! He was sick with sudden terror and surprise. He walked blindly, jostling people he met. She takes everything beautiful out of my life! His hands clenched in his pockets. No. When he said love, he meant hate.

The Indian girl walked down the grass to the ship. The waves, pale and white-crested, parted before her. The waves were like white breasts lying apart waiting for him. It was cold in the sea. She wants to kill me. Now he knew what was meant by death—beautiful in coldness. White breasts like sculptured things. They were so still he could lie in them forever. Death. The peace of perfection. In the cold pure sky quivered the thin rays of stars. The end of life. I love her, not beautiful—her weak body torn by life.

No, no, no! He could not endure it. Seas paler, and paler still. Not beautiful. The water ran out forever. Dawn, and the empty sands like glowing shadows of silk. A sandpiper flying overhead made dim reflections of himself. With flashings of heavy light, the water unrolled, and sank back from the beach.

CHARLES made repeated unsuccessful efforts to see Julia. It was a long time before he was willing to be convinced that she was avoiding him. When he finally realized it, he felt that he had been going toward a place which seemed beautiful, but

that when he stood in it there was only emptiness. The emptiness was in him, hard, like a light which disclosed nothing but its own brightness. He hated, but the emotion had no particular object, for, by its very intensity, even Julia was obliterated. There was nothing but himself, a thing frozen in a brilliance which blinded its own eyes. If he could have felt anything definite against her it would have been easier. To stop hating the emptiness, he began to drink more heavily. If he permitted himself to seek an object through which his suffering could be expressed he reverted to Catherine. He must keep away from that. I mustn't hurt her. Poor old girl. It's not right.

He found that his repugnance to Catherine had become so acute that, to keep himself from saying and doing irretrievable things, it was necessary to escape the house and her presence. By God, it's rotten! She's stood by me. I've got to be good to her.

In his rejuvenated conception of his wife he exaggerated both her acuteness and her capacity for suffering. It now appeared to him that she had immolated herself on the altar of an ideal of which he

was the embodiment. She's loved me. She's always loved me. I don't know what's the matter with me. Christ, what a rotten world this is!

Then her small face rose up before him in all its evasive pleasantness. He hated the faded prettiness of it; the withered look of her throat; the velvet band she wore about her neck to make herself appear younger when she was in evening dress. He hated her delicate characterless hands that were less fresh than her face. The very memory of her rings oppressed him. She was always so richly yet so discreetly dressed. Such perfect taste. She had a way of seeming to call attention to other people's bad breeding. He remembered the glasses she put on when she read and hated the look of them on her small nose. The little grimace she made when she laughed. Her verbal insistence on sensible footgear and the feeling he always had that her shoes were too small for her. The quizzical contempt with which she baffled him. Her sweet severe smile behind which she concealed herself.

My God, I've got to. I've got to. When he realized that the recollection of Julia was coming into his mind he went somewhere and took another drink. It was hot and quieting. Warm sensual dark in

which he could hide himself. Julia was something bright and glassy that stabbed his eyes. He put her out like a light. He held fast to his sense of sin. He had to torture himself with reproaches to make it seem worth while to go back to his wife.

CHARLES tried to immerse himself in business. This was the one province in which he could act without hesitations. He called it, "playing the game". The atmosphere of trade hardened him. He had unconsciously absorbed some of his wife's contempt for the details of money making. Where he was not permitted to be sentimental, he luxuriated in a callousness of which he was incapable in his intimate life.

Day after day, scrupulously dressed, he sat in his office, an expensive cigar between his lips, preserving to his associates what would be called a "poker face". If he were able to get the best of any one—especially through doubtful and unanticipated means—it gave him an illusion of power which tempted him later to prolific benevolence. He had begun life as a telegraph operator in a small town. He deserted this profession to go into trade. At one time he was a small manufacturer. Later he sold

mining stock, and promoted a company that ultimately failed. His first success had come when he went into the lumber industry, and he had recently become possessed of some oil fields that were making him rich.

Charles never felt pity for any one who was on a financial equality with himself. He would fleece such a man without a qualm. He distrusted Socialists, tolerated trade unions with suspicion, but was sorry for "the rough necks". Poor devils! I know what it's like. We're all of us poor devils. He loved to think of himself as one who, through sheer force of initiative, had risen despite unusual handicaps. By gosh, before I get through I'm going to be quits with the world! At least we can keep the women out of this—! Damned muck!

In the flush of unscrupulous conquest, his eyes glistened with triumph. His gestures were harshly confident. He looked young and happy. If, at such times, he encountered women, they found his mixture of simplicity and ruthlessness particularly ingratiating.

IN the street Charles remembered a small niece whom he had not thought of for a long time. Brother's kid. I'll send her something. His brother was a poor man working on a small salary. Charles wanted to do something generous that would help him to think well of himself. God, what a fool I am! He walked along briskly with his hat off, looking insolent and debonair. When an acquaintance passed in a motor car a jovial greeting was exchanged. To make himself oblivious to the resentment which was in the memory of Julia, Charles dwelt elaborately on the memory of other women. Blanche, damn her! I'll have to go and see her again. One hand around the old boy's neck and the other in his pocket. He tried to keep away from the center toward which his thoughts converged. What price life! Hell! (In the depths of me, this awful despair. Horror, horror, horror. Something clutched and dragged him into himself.) He stretched his neck above his collar and passed his finger along the edge. (Some woman's throat white like that. Bent back. Lilies on a windy day. I shall die.)

Young Goode coming toward him. Goode thinking, Here's that unmoral innocent. He'll live forever. Hurst's a bounder. Damn well-meaning ass.

They stood on the street corner gossiping. Young Goode's brown eyes desponded from boredom. Very handsome. A black mustache. His nose almost Greek. His head empty—only a few clever thoughts. "Hello, Hurst." "Hello, Goode, old chap. Yes, going out to Marburne to-morrow—Wilson and his wife. How are you? What do you think of the election? Glad that crook, Hallowell, got kicked out."

Goode said he was thinking of turning Bolshevist. His smile was self-appreciative. Ludicrous!

"Well, I hope not. Haven't come to that yet. But the patriotism of some of these ward heelers is pretty thin. Yes—hope we'll see you."

They moved apart. Young Goode grew small in distance. A dark vanishing speck down the glaring street. Christ, what a hot day! Charles mumbled over some obscene expressions. I don't want to think. (Catherine, lilies, white and beautiful neck.)

Charles had gone all the way to town on foot. In front of the building where his office was located he encountered Mr. Wilson. "Hello! Hello! What do you think of this for the beginning of fall? Hot, eh? About time for another drink? Yes, going out to your wife's new place. Kate says it's quite a

buy. Not yours? What's a husband now-a-days! Superfluous critter. Endured but not wanted."

Mr. Wilson's eyes were twinklingly submerged between his fat cheeks and bulging brows. He hadn't time for a drink. He wanted to talk business before he left town. He chuckled at everything Charles said. His full cheeks quivered and his neat belly shook in the opening of his coat. Charles was wary of unqualified approbation, but the more suspicious he became the more easy and Rabelaisian was his conversation. "Well—well—well, Hurst! I'll be—" Mr. Wilson actually suffered in delight.

They had seated themselves in Charles's inner room, a handsome heavy desk between them. Charles gazed with cold innocent eyes at the laughing fat man opposite.

When Mr. Wilson had gone Charles opened a cupboard and took out a bottle. In business hours he was very moderate in his indulgence.

A long white road, just empty, going nowhere. The car jumped to his touch. How cool and still it had been in the woods at evening when he and Julia drove home. That's beautiful. Myself beautiful, wanting to be loved. Fat old fool. Little children, little children, come unto me.

My God, he said out loud, I'm getting a screw loose. Growing senile! Julia—that hurts. I can't think of that. Kate, poor girl!

All day he felt as though the memory of some pathetic death had made him kind.

AT last Paul had made up his mind to run away. His interest in the revolution had waned. What do I think? May—that Farley woman. I don't know. His emotions had betrayed him. Where am I? I don't know anything. I don't know myself. He was unhappy, afraid that some one would discover for him that his unhappiness also was absurd. His aunt, and Uncle Archie, were intimate with the things that made his thoughts. He wanted to go away, overseas, to know things which their recognitions had never touched. When he was a part of foreign life they would not be able to reach his thoughts. He wanted to put his wonder into things that were dark to them.

There were days when he spent all his free time among the docks. He edged into the vast obscurity of warehouses. Red-necked men, half dressed, were pushing trucks about. When they shouted orders to each other their voices echoed in the twilight of

dust and mingled odors in the huge sheds. Through an opening, far off, Paul saw the side of a ship, white, on which the sun struck a ray like light on another world. There was a porthole in the glaring fragment of hull. The porthole glittered. The strip of water below it was like twinkling oil.

He made friends with a petty officer of a Brazilian freight boat who took him aboard for a visit. On the machine deck Paul saw sailors' clothes spread out to dry. With the smell of hot metal and grease was mingled the odor of fresh paint. He leaned over one of the ventilators and the air that came out of it almost overpowered him.

From where he stood he could see the city distantly. Here and there a tower radiated, or a gilded cornice on a high roof flashed through the opacity of smoke. When he faced the sun the glow was intolerable, but he turned another way and watched a world that looked drowned in light. The ships were crowded along the docks as if they were on dry land. Masts and smoke stacks bristled together. The harbor, filled with tugs and barges, seemed to have contracted so that the farthest line of shore was only a hand's throw away.

He listened to the creaking of hawsers and the

shouts in foreign tongues. When the wind turned toward him, the strong oily fragrance of the sacks of coffee that were being unloaded over the gang plank pervaded everything. The wind touched him like the hand of a ghost. Gulls with bright wings darted through the haze to rest for an instant amidst the refuse that floated in the brown fiery water.

Down in the engine room something was burring and churning. The water rose along the ship's side with a hiss of faint motion, and descended again as if in stealthy silence. Nothing but the lap, lap of tiny waves succeeding one another. As if the sun's rays had woven a net about it, the water was caught again in stillness. It was a transfixed glory like the end of the world.

I shall die. I shall never come back. Inside Paul was like a light growing dim to itself, going on forever in invisible distance. When he contemplated leaving everything he knew, he followed the disappearing light, and when it died away he belonged to the strange lands which wanted him like dreams. The river and the city, dim and harsh at the same time, had the indefiniteness which allowed him to give himself to them. He was in them, in smoke and endless distance. He listened to the hoarse startling

whistles of tugs, the shrill whistles of factories blowing the noon hour on land, the confusion of voices that rose from the small boats clustered about the ship's stern.

Going away. Dying. I shall be dead of light, not known. Fear of the unknown. There is only fear of the known, he said to himself, the known outside. The unknown is in me. He wondered what he was saying, growing up. Mature. He felt as if he had already gone far, far away, beyond the touch of the familiar things one never understood. The strange was close. It was his.

MAY felt herself lost in pale endless beauty of which Aunt Julia was a part. Love in the darkness. Love in her own room at night when she was alone and hugged her pillow to her wet face. Through the window she saw the trees in the street leaning together and mingling their odd shadows. An arc light was a blurred circle through the branches and the stiff leaves shaking and dropping occasionally to earth. When she was unseen she could give herself. If they saw her, they shut her in. Now she was everywhere, wanted, dark in the dark street. She could see a star above the roof and she was in

the star filled with thin light. She felt as if she were dying of love, dying of happiness. Happy over a world which was beautiful because she loved it. She loved Paul, but he was only a part of the secret city —a part of everything. She did not want to think of him too much. Jesus, everything, she said. I'm Jesus. She shivered at her blasphemy, and was glad. I'm Jesus! I'm Jesus! The leaves rattled against the window pane and fell into the dark street. It was too bright. She drew herself up in a knot and hid her face.

IT was a hot night. Bobby was excited and cross. He was going away to school the next day. His two trunks stood open on the floor of his room. Outside the windows the dry leaves rustled in the murky night. Some rain drops splattered against the lifted glass. Then there was silence, save for the occasional rattle of twigs in the darkness. An automobile slipped by with the long soft sound of rubber tires sucking damp asphalt. When the branches of the trees parted, the lights in the house opposite seemed to draw nearer. Bobby disliked their spying.

He clattered up and down the stairs and through

the halls in the still house where one could hear the clocks tick.

Depressed and resentful, Julia had kept herself from the boy and his preparations. He encountered her outside his door. She was passing quietly, trying not to be seen. "Gee whizz, Aunt Julia, I haven't got anybody to help me!" Julia realized that she was hypocritical in her determination to keep away from him. "I don't see why you can't help me, Aunt Julia."

Julia clasped her long pale fingers together in front of her black dress. She smiled. Bobby doesn't know! Oh, Laurence, how can you! "Hadn't you better do it alone, Bobby? Then you'll know where everything is." She was thinking how proud his throat looked above his open collar. His sunburned neck was full and slender like a flower calyx. She found something pathetic in his small hard face: his short straight nose, his sulky mouth, his round chin, his eyes that saw nothing but their own desires. She loved him. He hurt her so, hard beautiful little beast. She walked through the door, into his domain that recalled his school pennants and baseball bats. "What a trunk! You haven't left room for clothes, child."

"Well, gee whizz, Aunt Julia, I've got to take my boxing gloves and my hockey sticks, and there's not anything in yet." She crouched by the trunk and began to lift his treasures from it. "I'm afraid this will all have to be taken out."

Bobby stepped on her trailing skirt as he peered into the trunk. "Gosh, Aunt Julia, it's so long!" He added, "You're so darn slow."

"Have you asked May to help you?"

"Gosh, Aunt Julia, I don't want her! She never will help me anyway."

"I'm afraid you don't help her very much." Julia glanced over her shoulder. Her smile apologized for her severity.

"Well, gee, when she wants me to help her it's always some fool girl's thing. She's not going away to school."

Laurence, climbing the stairs slowly, heard their talk. He had hidden himself for the evening, and was on his way to bed. He went to the door and looked in. Julia saw him, and clambered to her feet, tripping over her skirt. Laurence concentrated his attention on Bobby. "Not through yet?"

"Well, darn it, Dad, I've got to get everything in these two measly little trunks. I just can't do it."

Laurence came forward. "Oh, yes, you can." He squatted beside the heap of clothes. Julia stepped back like an intruder. She watched his hands, with their gestures of delicacy and tension, moving among the scattered objects. His sweet sneer seemed graven on his face. Everything about him, his clumsy humped shoulders, the spread of his hams straining the cloth of his trousers, was full of her knowledge of him that he would not admit. Bobby ran about the room bringing things to his father. Rain fluttered out of the darkness and made threads of motion on the silvered glass. "You'd better shut that window, Bobby." Bobby struggled with the sash. "Gee whizz, Dad, it's so hot in here!"

Julia wanted to leave them, but could not. She felt blank, and excluded, as though they had thrust her out into the obliviousness of the night. She was tired of the disorder of her inner life, but there was an intoxication in desperation vivid enough to make remembered peace seem dead and unreal. The only peace she could look forward to would come in going on and on to the numbness of broken intensity. When one became God, one destroyed in order to accomplish one's godhead. By destruction one brought everything into one's self. But she was heavy with

the everything that she had become. It was too much. Only Laurence remained outside her. He would not have her. He was more than she, because he would not take her and become her. Love could not annihilate him. She understood the strategy of crucifixion, but could not accomplish it.

Laurence was rising stiffly to his feet. "Better, eh?"

Bobby was grudgingly appreciative. "There's a lot more. I'm much obliged. I guess it's all right."

Laurence settled his cuffs about his wrists and, drawing out a crumpled handkerchief, brushed dust from his small hands. "Well, that will do until morning anyway. Anything we can't find room for we'll send after you. You'd better get to bed now."

Julia said, "Good-night, Bobby, dear." "Good-night." Bobby did not see her face. "Good-night, Robert." " 'Night, Dad."

Julia followed Laurence out. Still he did not look at her. He was relieved by the certainty of Bobby's departure, and willing to acknowledge that he owed Julia some compensation. "Well, I suppose we'll miss the kid."

"I shall." They were before Julia's door. She hesitated with her hand on the knob. "Won't you

come in and talk to me a minute, Laurence?" He avoided her eyes again and stiffened weakly to resist her tone. "Pretty late, isn't it?" He noted her trembling lips. I can't bear that mouth. "Isn't it time you got to sleep?" "I can't sleep."

Then he had to meet her gaze. He was lost in it. He smiled wryly. "All right." With a sense of groping, he followed her in. He wanted the strength to keep her out of his life forever. When she exposed her misery to him, it was as if she were showing him breasts which he did not desire.

Julia said, "Sit down, won't you, Laurence? I feel almost as if you had never been here." Why did she treat him like a guest! He knew her suffering gaze was fixed on him steadily. Laurence, self-entangled, was ashamed to defend himself. He hated her because he loved her. He was jealous of the virgin quality of his pain, and he must give it up for her to ravage in a shared emotion. It was as if her hands, sensually understanding, were reaching voluptuously for his heart.

"You've changed your furniture around." He fumbled in his pocket for a cigar. Julia was closer. He could feel her movement closer to him. He could no longer hide himself.

Julia knelt by the side of his chair. "Are you sending Bobby off to get him away from me, Laurie?"

I shall have to look at her. I can't! I can't! "What an idea, Julia!"

"Laurie, don't punish me! It's killing me to be shut out of your life."

His head was bent over his unlit cigar, as he rolled it endlessly in his fingers. A tear splashed on his hand—his own tear. He wondered at it. He was helpless. "Laurie, my darling! I love you, whether you love me or not!" She was pressing his head against her. His lost head. It lolled. It was hers. Everything was hers. She had taken him, and was exposing his love for her. This would be the hardest thing to forget. Could he ever forget? He gave himself limply to her exultance. "You've killed me, Julia. What is there to forgive? Yes, I love you. I love you." They leaned together. How easily she cries! They love each other. "Oh, Laurie, my darling, my darling! Thank you! Thank you!" She was kissing his hands. He writhed inwardly. My God, not that! Even *I* can't bear it! "Don't, Julia. Please don't." "I want to be yours, Laurie —oh, won't you let me be yours?" "Julia, I'm any-

thing. I'm broken. I don't know." He was weeping through his fingers. She pulled them apart, and pressed her lips to his face and his closed eyes.

After a time they were calm. She was tender to his humiliation. When he lit the cigar which he had recovered from the floor, she sat at his feet and smiled. He recognized his need of her now. It was dull and persistent. Yes, God forbid that I should judge anybody. I love her.

"Laurie?"

"Julia?" His furtive eyes admitted the sin she put on them.

"Dear Laurie! I love you so much."

Unacknowledged, each kept for himself a pain which the other could not heal. Each pitied the other's illusion, and was steadied by it into gentleness.

THE END

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